

A close-up photograph of a chipmunk perched on a pine branch. The chipmunk is facing right, with its body angled towards the viewer. It has brown fur with dark stripes along its back and a white belly. The background is a soft-focus green, showing pine needles and branches. The text "Days of Praise" is overlaid in the upper half of the image.

Days of Praise

March ♦ April ♦ May 2023

Days of Praise

Daily Bible Readings and Devotional Commentaries

March • April • May 2023

*“The earth is the LORD’s, and the fulness thereof;
the world, and they that dwell therein.”*

(Psalm 24:1)

Photo Source: Bigstock

Photographer: Andrew Berezovsky

Institute for Creation Research • Copyright © 2023

Scripture quotations are from the
King James Version of the Bible

For subscription information, call 800.337.0375

Introduction to
DAYS OF PRAISE

“And [Paul] said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness.” (Acts 26:15-16)

Dear Christian friend,

What we learn from this text is that long before we loved Jesus, He knew and loved us and had a specific purpose for our new life in Him. I trust that each of us is confident that we’re ministering right where He intends for us to be.

Like Paul, may we also be a witness to those who don’t know Jesus to “open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in [Jesus]” (Acts 26:18). Perhaps some of the thoughtful Bible studies in this booklet will empower our efforts toward that end.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will use these devotional thoughts to help you fall deeper in love with the Lord Jesus and our good heavenly Father.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Randy J. Guliuzza, President

Contributors:

HMM

HMM III

JDM

JPT

CM

Henry M. Morris, Ph.D.

Henry M. Morris III, D.Min.

John D. Morris, Ph.D.

Jeffrey P. Tomkins, Ph.D.

Chas Morse

ICR YouTube Channel

Subscribe at [YouTube.com/@icrscience](https://www.youtube.com/@icrscience) for videos showcasing creation science evidence and experts affirming the truth of the Bible!

ICR Podcasts



Days of Praise: Daily devotions to strengthen and encourage your faith



The Creation Podcast: Explore the latest discoveries from a biblical worldview



Creation.Live: Scientists and experts discuss apologetics and the creation-evolution debate



Science, Scripture, & Salvation: Discover how science confirms the Bible and glorifies the Creator

Get equipped with answers to the most controversial questions of faith and science. Visit [ICR.org/followicr](https://www.ICR.org/followicr) and [ICR.org/podcasts](https://www.ICR.org/podcasts) for more information.

Wednesday, March 1

The Dark Valleys

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4)

There are many dark valleys mentioned in Scripture, and these typify the many sufferings and hard experiences through which the people of God must pass. “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Philippians 1:29).

The valley of Achor—which means “trouble”—was so named because sin in the camp of God’s people had caused great defeat for their armies there (Joshua 7:25-26). Willful sin inevitably must result eventually in a trek through the dark vale of trouble and defeat.

Then there is the vale of tears called Baca, or “weeping.” Opinions differ as to whether this was an actual valley in Israel, but it came to symbolize a time of deep loss and sorrow. Repentance and restitution will lead one out of the valley of Achor, but God’s comfort will guide through Baca. “Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee....Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well....They go from strength to strength” (Psalm 84:5-7).

Perhaps the darkest valley of all is the valley of the shadow of death. All must enter that valley once at least—some may even travel it often before its thick darkness finally conquers them. For those without Christ, it is a valley of great fear; there have been multitudes “who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:15).

But for those who know the Lord, they need fear no evil for God is with them. Even His guiding staff and buffeting rod are comforting for they prove the love of the Shepherd. No wonder the 23rd Psalm is the most requested passage of Scripture by those deep in this dark valley. HMM

Thursday, March 2

Much Yet to Do

“Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.” (Joshua 13:1)

There is no set “retirement age” for the Christian, for there is always “yet very much land to be possessed.” Joshua had survived 40 years in the wilderness, then led in the long hard conquest of Canaan, and was now at least 80 years of age. Not only was he “old and stricken in years,” but God even told him he was old! But instead of allowing him to settle down to enjoy a few retirement years in his hard-won new home, God sent Joshua out once again for further conquests.

That must always be the case with those who love and serve the Lord. There is still much Scripture to study and learn, many people yet to reach with a gospel witness, many with whom to share God’s love and comfort, much money yet to be earned to give to missions. Even those who must retire from active service or become confined at home still have much praying to accomplish.

No one who knows the redemptive love of Jesus Christ is ever too old to possess more “land” for the Lord. “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing” (Psalm 92:12-14).

Old age eventually comes to everyone who survives youth and middle age, but that does not mean it is time to quit. “O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come” (Psalm 71:17-18). HMM

Friday, March 3

Without Form and Void

“I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light.” (Jeremiah 4:23)

The language in this verse is clearly patterned after Genesis 1:2, the description of the primordial earth: “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” That it is a metaphor, however, and not an actual reference to that primordial earth is evident from its context. The previous verse speaks of “my people” (that is, the people of Judah) and the following verse of “the mountains” (there were no mountains as yet at the time of Genesis 1:2).

Furthermore, the broader context makes it plain that the prophet is speaking of a coming judgment on the land of Judah because of the rebellion of its people against their God (verse 16 specifically mentions Judah, and verse 31 mentions Zion). The land is to be so devastated that the prophet compared its future appearance to the unformed and barren earth at its very beginning.

This ultimate fulfillment will be at Armageddon. The same Hebrew words (*tohu* for “without form,” and *bohu* for “void”) occur again in this context in an awesome scene of judgment described by Isaiah: “For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations” (34:2), gathered together in the former land of Edom to fight against Jerusalem when Christ returns, “and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion [i.e., *tohu*], and the stones of emptiness [i.e., *bohu*]” (34:11). Instead of the regular surveyor’s line and markers ordering the property boundaries, God’s judgment will bring such disorder and barrenness to the land that it almost will seem to revert back to its primeval state at the beginning of time. “Nevertheless we...look for new heavens and a new earth” (2 Peter 3:13), and that earth will be beautiful and bountiful with “no night there” (Revelation 22:5). HMM

Saturday, March 4

Grace, Mercy, and Peace

“Paul...To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”
(2 Timothy 1:1-2)

Of the 13 letters written by the apostle Paul, only the three to Timothy and Titus use this threefold greeting: “Grace, mercy, and peace.” The other 10 letters use the more common “grace and peace.” Why the distinction? The Holy Spirit is never whimsical or capricious. Perhaps, since these three letters were the only ones addressed to pastors that Paul had trained, there was a more poignant emphasis intended.

Grace (*charis*) is the foundational core of God’s gift of salvation to those who trust Him (Ephesians 2:8). It is also the essence of the “gifts” that we received from the Holy Spirit to minister to each other (1 Corinthians 15:10). The *charis* is the basis for *charisma* that we receive. Those who have been entrusted with leadership responsibilities are reminded that the measure of those gifts is still God’s *charis* (Romans 12:3, 6).

Mercy is often understood through God’s forgiveness both in justice delayed and sentence nullified through Christ. It is also what the sovereign Godhead responds with when we ask for His help. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

Peace is much more than mere lack of anxiety. It is “not as the world giveth” (John 14:27) but rather a supernatural, noncircumstantial contentment that is only given to the Lord’s twice-born. This peace is “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” and is specifically designed to “keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

May this grace, mercy, and peace be a regular portion of your walk in the Kingdom as you serve the Lord Jesus.
HMM III

Sunday, March 5

“Very Good”

“And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” (Genesis 1:31)

On several occasions during the creation week, God had declared aspects of His creation as “good” (vv. 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). But once His crown of creation was in place, the very image of Himself (vv. 26-27), He pronounced it all “very good” and ceased His creative activity (2:1-3).

Just what does it mean to be “very good” in God’s eyes? This term is used elsewhere in the Old Testament by men and regarding men, but here God Himself, the sinless, ever-living One, declares creation to be just what He wanted—able to accomplish and fulfill each of His plans and desires for it. Whatever else may be said about this creation, at the very least it must have been without death, being a phenomenon that is anathema to Him.

Death is identified as “the last enemy that shall be destroyed” (1 Corinthians 15:26). “Death reigned from Adam to Moses” (Romans 5:14), and “it is appointed unto men once to die” (Hebrews 9:27). Indeed, “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:22). The source of this condition is known as the curse pronounced on all of creation due to man’s rebellion against God (Genesis 3) as had been promised (2:17). Even today “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), and since all sin, all must die. Truly, sin has ruined God’s original sinless, deathless, “very good” creation.

But the story does not end there. The very Creator who pronounced the awful curse of death as the penalty for sin has Himself died to pay that penalty and one day will repeal the curse (Revelation 22:3) and abolish death (21:4). The creation will be returned to its original created intent, and all will once again be “very good.” JDM

Monday, March 6

Living Truths

“He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.” (Mark 12:27)

Sin and death are grim realities in the world, but these are only temporary intruders, as it were. The God of creation is the living God; and “Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16) is our living Savior, alive forevermore. It is appropriate, therefore, that the term “living” is applied over and over again to great truths of the Christian faith.

For example, the Holy Scriptures are called “the lively oracles” (Acts 7:38). “Lively” and “living” represent the same Greek word *zao*; thus, the Bible is God’s “living word.” Jesus Christ called Himself “the living bread which came down from heaven,” sent down by “the living Father” (John 6:51, 57). He also promised that all who believe on Him would find “living water” flowing through their lives (John 7:38).

He has opened for us through His substitutionary death and justifying resurrection “a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Hebrews 10:20). Furthermore, He has thereby “begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).

The Lord Jesus is the foundation of the great house of the Lord into which we come through Him. “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:4-5). In this holy temple, we are therefore urged to “present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is [our] reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). Our God is, indeed, the God of the living! HMM

Tuesday, March 7

Tragic Lot

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” (Psalm 1:1)

One of the most tragic figures in all of Scripture is that of compromising Lot, Abraham’s nephew, who renounced the land of promise for the sinful society of Sodom, ultimately to lose everything of importance.

His slide into apostasy, as traced in Genesis 12–19, seems to parallel the progression described in today’s text of not becoming a godly believer.

Lot is first mentioned as traveling with Abram and Sarai from their homeland to Canaan in obedience to God’s command (Genesis 12:4-5; 13:5). A petty problem arises that surely could have been resolved (13:6-10), but Lot chose (v. 11) to walk in the counsel of the ungodly. “But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly” (v. 13).

Lot soon found a home in the city itself, not content to merely herd his flocks in the fertile valley. By standing in the way of sinners, when Sodom was attacked by enemies he was captured (14:12) and later rescued by Abram (vv. 14-16).

Lot’s identification with wicked Sodom did not end there, as it should have, for when the city’s wickedness was beyond God’s forbearance, Lot was found sitting in the seat of the scornful, a leader of the city, sitting in the gates with the town fathers (19:1). Lot was a “just” (or “righteous”) man, “vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked” (2 Peter 2:7), but his actions (Genesis 19:8) and his lack of spiritual influence even within his own family (vv. 14-16, 31-38) testify to the horror of such a compromising lifestyle.

May God grant us all the persevering faith of Abraham and not the compromising faith of Lot. JDM

The Flame of Gifts

“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.”
(2 Timothy 1:6)

The apostle Paul uses more unique words in his writings than any other Bible author. Such is the case with the verb *anazopureo*, translated as “stir up” in our text for today, which is a compound of three Greek terms.

Ana, a primary preposition and adverb, is most often translated as “again” or “each,” depending on its context. *Zoon* is a frequently used noun meaning “life” or “living creature.” And *pur* is a root word meaning “fire” or “fiery.” Since it is only used this one time in the Scriptures, the translation is a bit difficult to coin an adequate English word or phrase for.

“Bring the fire alive (again)” is certainly implied from the syntax. “Make each fire alive” would emphasize the implied multiplicity of gifts. The tense indicates an ongoing process, and the direct object (the gift) seems to emphasize the need for Timothy’s action—since God gave Timothy the special leadership gift(s) when Paul personally ordained Timothy.

Paul’s first letter to Timothy implies that the young disciple had allowed the “fire” to grow weak in his ministry. Difficulty, discouragement, or doubt can attack anyone. Apathy, pessimism, worry, or lack of confidence can spin into lack of support or encouragement from friends or coworkers. Whatever the cause, the results are the same.

We can quench the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) so that we no longer sense His leading. We can even grieve the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), bringing conviction to us in an effort to bring repentance and restoration. Such discipline is not pleasant but is necessary (Hebrews 12:11). But if we are to live in active joy while serving the Lord, we must “stir up” the gifts that He has carefully given us. HMM III

Thursday, March 9

Biblical Creation Is Real History

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” (Genesis 1:1-2)

An accurate understanding of the universe’s beginning is based solely on God’s written Word. The Genesis narrative is real history and essential doctrine. Mankind needs to listen to God’s revelation and understand that the six-day creation is a series of supernatural, instantaneous, inexplicable miracles. There’s not one hint of nature selecting or evolution substituting as God’s “creative” tool.

Unfortunately, many Christians desire to force an external ideology on Scripture. Can’t the words of Genesis stand on their own? Why impose gaps in between verses or breaks between chapters of Genesis? Martin Luther and the Reformation greats argued for the clarity (perspicuity) of the biblical text. Hebrews 11:3 underscores the truth by affirming that “through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

Believer, listen to God. “In the beginning (time) God (source) created (energy) the heaven (space) and the earth (matter).” Elohim accurately describes His actions before there was anything. At the beginning of time, the Trinity ingeniously painted an epic masterpiece. Our minds have a difficult time imagining what the spectacular scene was like. I’m envious of what the morning stars (angels) saw that creation week when they “shouted for joy” (Job 38:7).

Understanding our world begins with our Bibles in hand, looking through its magnificent lens to understand history. CM

Friday, March 10

The Sin of Complaining

“And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.” (Psalm 106:15)

Christians who complain about their circumstances would do well to ponder this sobering verse and its background. God had greatly blessed His people, Israel, delivering them supernaturally from slavery in Egypt, protecting them against their enemies—even miraculously supplying daily bread and water for them in the desert.

Still they complained—about their food, about the imaginary luxuries they had left behind in Egypt, and against their leaders. “And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled” (Numbers 11:1). Finally, when they complained about the manna, “the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly.” He sent them quail to eat in such abundance as to last “even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you.” Then, “while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed...the LORD smote the people with a very great plague” (Numbers 11:10, 20, 33).

God has blessed every Christian with forgiveness of sin and eternal life. He daily fulfills His promise to supply every need (not every desire, however), and we should live a thankful life in return, regardless of our particular lot in this world. “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5). “Do all things without murmurings and disputings” (Philippians 2:14). Complaining about what we don’t have may well result in God taking away what we do have—and still worse, sending leanness into our souls. HMM

Saturday, March 11

The Finger of God

“This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.” (John 8:6)

During His earthly ministry, Jesus never wrote a book or any other document, so far as we know, but it is recorded that He wrote with His own finger in the sand and that what He wrote turned away those who had sought to stone a woman caught breaking one of God’s Ten Commandments.

The woman was repentant, however, and Jesus forgave her, evidently indicating this by what He wrote with His finger on the ground. This He could do because He, as God, had written this very commandment Himself with His own finger long before. “And he gave unto Moses... two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18). Moses testified: “And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the LORD spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly” (Deuteronomy 9:10).

There are only two other references to the “finger of God” in the Bible. When the Lord through Moses brought the great plagues upon Egypt, Pharaoh’s magicians were able to imitate Moses’ first few miracles, but soon their deceptive “magic” could no longer compare, and they had to confess, “This is the finger of God” (Exodus 8:19).

There is one final mention of God’s finger in the New Testament. When the Pharisees charged that His power to cast evil spirits out of demon-possessed people had been given to Him by Satan, He affirmed rather, “I with the finger of God cast out devils” (Luke 11:20). Jesus is able both to forgive sins and to defeat Satan because He is the Creator of the universe and all its laws. HMM

Limitations on God's Promises

“Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.” (Jeremiah 31:37)

The people of Israel, in spite of all God had done for them, continually rebelled against Him, even turning to other gods. One might think God would have destroyed them and started again, but He had made a promise first to Abraham, then to Isaac, and then to Jacob that this nation would be His special people, and He would not break that promise.

In our text God reveals the “conditions” under which He would cast off Israel, but they are such that there is no possibility of their being met.

If heaven above can be measured: Neither Abraham nor Jeremiah could have had any concept of the number of stars or the depth of space. Now, with modern telescopes, we see unthinkable distances and even farther and farther as our technology increases. Estimates of the radius of the universe now stand at around 46 billion light-years, and no end is in sight.

If the foundations of the earth [can be] searched out beneath: Sometimes scientists claim they know more about the sun than they do the earth. But in reality, only one percent of the earth's radius has been explored. The pressures and temperatures that exist deep inside the earth are unthinkably great, and we don't even know how matter acts under those conditions. The promise to Israel is secure.

Scripture is likewise full of “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4) made to the believer. Our text indicates God's attitudes toward His promises. We need not worry that He will keep His Word. JDM

Monday, March 13

A Voice from Heaven

“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:16-17)

We have not only the solemn endorsement of our Lord for the ordinance of baptism by His submitting to it (to fulfill all righteousness, Matthew 3:15), but also such a glorious demonstration of baptism as will never occur again. In this event, we see the presence of all three persons of the holy Trinity—God the Son who is baptized, God the Spirit who descends like a dove and rests upon Jesus, and God the Father who audibly speaks from heaven.

This is a clear indication that Christ’s redemptive mission involved the eternal counsel of all three persons of the Godhead. Interestingly, we also see evidence of the trinitarian counsel at the beginning of man’s creation in Genesis 1:26: “Let *us* make man in *our* image.” And again the triune God makes a profound declaration at the beginning of the New Testament journey of Christ Jesus to redeem and save mankind, created 4,000 years prior, who had fallen into total depravity in the Edenic rebellion (Genesis 3).

In the Lord’s baptism account, “a voice from heaven” is also significant because of the previous instance of God speaking from heaven in the giving of the law on Sinai (Exodus 20). Our Father in heaven wanted to mark both occasions with special honor. Profoundly, the introduction of the gospel was heralded by the Father’s words proclaiming, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” JPT

Tuesday, March 14

Made in Christ

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” (1 Corinthians 1:30)

The Greek word *ginomai*, translated “is made” in this verse, is most fascinating. It is rendered many different ways—“become,” etc., as well as “be made.” Most often it is simply translated “be.” It basically means “begin to be,” or “be caused to be.” It is even applied to the work of Christ in calling the universe into being. “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3). “Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Hebrews 11:3).

It is frequently used also to denote the marvelous work of Christ in and on the believing Christian. As our text says, He becomes wisdom to us who lack wisdom; He is made our righteousness, although we were sinners; we who are unholy receive our sanctification in Him; and when we were lost, He became our redemption. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become [same word, *ginomai*] the sons of God” (John 1:12). All that Christ is, we are made through His great sacrifice for us.

Note some of the other things we are made in Christ, by His grace. We are “made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13). We are “made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7). “We are made partakers of Christ” and also “made partakers of the Holy Ghost” (Hebrews 3:14; 6:4).

In fact, when we receive Christ, old things pass away and “all things *are become* [same word] new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). These wonderful attributes are given to us and appropriated right now by faith and will be accomplished in full perfection when Christ returns and “we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). HMM

Wednesday, March 15

Living Waters

“A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.” (Song of Solomon 4:15)

There are eight verses in the Bible with the phrase “living water,” four in the Old Testament, four in the New. All beautifully describe a spiritual truth under the figure of a flowing stream of refreshing water.

The first of these (in our text above) is a portion of the description of the lovely character of a bride as seen by her coming bridegroom, almost certainly symbolic of the Lord and His people. But then, through the prophet, God laments that “my people...have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). “They have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters” (Jeremiah 17:13). One day they shall return, however, and Zechariah prophesies that “living waters shall go out from Jerusalem....And the LORD shall be king over all the earth” (Zechariah 14:8-9).

In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus appropriated this metaphor to Himself as He spoke to a woman of Samaria. “If thou knewest the gift of God...he would have given thee living water” (John 4:10; see also v. 11). “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). Later in Jerusalem, He cried out to all, saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said [referring, no doubt, to the above Old Testament passages], out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38). Then in the last book of the Bible is found a special promise for those who die for the Lord’s sake. “[He] shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Revelation 7:17). HMM

Thursday, March 16

The Winds of the World

“The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.” (Ecclesiastes 1:6)

This is one of the Bible’s many scientific insights, written long before such a process was discovered in the modern science of meteorology. The basic circulation of the atmosphere (which generates the winds of the world) is “toward the south” near the ground, which then “turneth about unto the north” aloft. The heated air near the equator expands and rises, then flows north to replace the colder, heavier air that has descended to the ground in the polar regions.

This simple north-south-north cycle is complicated, however, by the earth’s rotation. Further complexities are introduced by the different topographical features of the surface (oceans, mountains, etc.), but the end result is a general circulation of the whole atmosphere, which “whirleth about continually, and...returneth again according to his circuits.”

None of this was understood at all until very modern times, but this ancient verse in Ecclesiastes corresponds beautifully to modern science. In fact, it was not even known until recent times that air had weight, but the patriarch Job had noted about 4,000 years ago that “he...seeth under the whole heaven; to make the weight for the winds” (Job 28:24-25), and this fact is essential to the atmospheric circulation.

This is only one of many scientific principles implied in the Bible ages before men discovered them in their scientific research. In contrast, there are no demonstrable scientific errors in the Bible. This is not really surprising, for the same God who wrote the Word made the world! In Jesus Christ “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). HMM

Friday, March 17

Psalm 104's Creation Song

“Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.”
(Psalm 104:1)

This psalm captures a historical event recorded in the first scroll of Moses' inspired text—God's creation of all things. Many scholars, even those casting serious doubts on the historicity of Genesis, concede to the chronological order of this song. Examine carefully the prose, capturing the wonder, exuberance, and praises of God's creative finger—and ponder how these inspired words relate to life then and now.

Both Psalm 104 and Genesis 1 portray God as our Creator, showing how He owns us as His creation and how He is to be praised. The psalm takes the reader from the waters of creation to the terrible waters of the Noahic Flood when they were at their highest, covering “all the high hills” (Genesis 7:19-20; Psalm 104:6-9; 2 Peter 3:5-6).

Scholars have noted the parallels between Psalm 104 and Genesis 1.¹

Day 1: Light (Psalm 104:2a)

Day 2: Creation of the firmament, waters above (vv. 2b-4)

Day 3: Dry land appears, formation of plants (vv. 5-18)

Day 4: Luminaries indicating times and seasons (vv. 19-23)

Day 5: Creatures (vv. 24-26)

Day 6: Gift of life by God for animals and man (vv. 27-30)

Believer, never allow anyone to discount the historicity of Genesis 1–2. This magnificent psalm underscores and confirms the literalness of creation's historical record. CM

1. Kidner, Derek. 1975. *Psalms 73-150: A Commentary on Books III-V of the Psalms*. London: Inter-Varsity Press.

Behold the Lamb

“And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36)

As he spoke to two of his followers, John the Baptist was, in effect, telling them that they should henceforth leave him to follow Jesus. “And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus” (John 1:37). On the previous day, when John had first seen Jesus coming, he had said, apparently to all his disciples, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

This is the first use of the word “lamb” in the New Testament, and it is significant that it refers here to the Lord Jesus as the one great sacrifice for our sins. He is called “the Lamb” 30 more times in the New Testament, the final time no longer viewing Him on the altar but on His eternal throne (Revelation 22:3). Yet, even on His throne as our King, He is still the Lamb, and we can never forget that He once died for us that we might live with Him.

Long before this, Isaac once asked his father, “Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham answered, “God will provide himself a lamb” (Genesis 22:7-8). God did just that 2,000 years later, when Christ, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8), “came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).

Then when God was ready to set His people free in ancient Egypt, He told them to place the shed blood of a spotless lamb on the doorpost of each home and said, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exodus 12:13). In fulfillment of all these ancient sacrifices and types, the once-for-all Lamb of God came, and “Christ our passover is sacrificed [even] for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Now, like John’s disciples, it surely compels us, in the very depths of our souls, to “behold the Lamb of God” and follow Him. HMM

Sunday, March 19

Divine Power, Divine Nature

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1:3-4)

Certain passages of Scripture simply take one’s breath away. Our text for today is just such a passage. To those He has called, God has promised “all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” He has provided all that we need to live godly and productive lives. It is “his divine power” (emphatic in the Greek text), imparted to us in the person of the indwelling Holy Spirit, that makes this possible.

In order to properly utilize our resources, we must continue to grow in “the [full] knowledge of him.” Only then can we attain any measure of His “glory and virtue.” He has empowered us to reflect His glorious character and virtuous acts as we know who He is and what He has done. In so doing, we are “partakers of the divine nature” (also emphatic in the Greek).

Initially, of course, at the point of salvation we are given the Holy Spirit, always present in the life of a believer. As we increase in the knowledge of Him and yield to the work of the Spirit, our nature is ever more conformed to the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

This appropriation of divine power to sample the divine nature comes to us through “exceeding great and precious promises” bestowed by His glory and virtue. Since God has promised, these promises are sure, and through them we have “escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” JDM

Monday, March 20

The Obedience of Christ

“I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” (John 5:30)

Christ is our great example in all things—even in that of obedience to the Father and His will. As the perfect Son, He obeyed His Father in all things. “I do nothing of myself,” He said, “but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him” (John 8:28-29).

There are three specific references in the epistles to the obedience of Christ. One of the most profound passages in the Bible is Hebrews 5:8: “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.” How could the omniscient Son of God have to *learn* anything? There are some things that cannot be learned in books but only by experience, and obedience in hard circumstances is surely one of these. Jesus learned obedience by actual experience.

Christ obeyed His Father even after praying that the bitter cup might be taken away. “Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8).

Had He been disobedient, as was Adam, we could never have known salvation. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Romans 5:19). Jesus was, indeed, always perfectly obedient to His Father’s word, “leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

As our text emphasizes, His obedience consisted simply of seeking and following the will of His Father in all things. “Not my will, but thine” (Luke 22:42). HMM

Tuesday, March 21

King of Kings and Lord of Lords

“These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”
(Revelation 17:14)

There is coming a time—perhaps not too far in the future—when all the kings and other rulers of the world will “have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” (v. 13), the great humanistic world system of the last days, whose Satan-possessed leader will then have power “given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations” (13:7).

Only one opponent will remain, the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, against whom “the kings of the earth...take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Psalm 2:2-3).

So they will proceed to “make war with the Lamb,” but they will lose! At the final “appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ...he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:14-15). He, who as God’s sacrificial Lamb has taken “away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), is greater than all kings and rulers.

No longer as the submissive Lamb before His shearers (Isaiah 53:7), but as the “Word of God,” out of whose once-silent mouth now “goeth a sharp sword” with which He shall “smite the nations.” He will have “on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:13, 15-16).

Indeed, the kings and leaders of the whole world will think they can successfully “make war with the Lamb,” but He “shall overcome them.” In that great day that is coming, it will be far better to be with Him than with them! HMM

Wednesday, March 22

Power, Love, and a Sound Mind

“For God hath not given us a spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (2 Timothy 1:7)

This little verse is full of information. In the previous verse, Paul insisted that Timothy “stir up” the gift that he had received and use it as it was intended because God did not give us a “spirit of fear.”

The Greek word *deilia*, translated as “fear,” stresses timidity or cowardice as opposed to terror. God’s gift does not function well if we are too timid to use it. His gift has power, love, and a “sound mind.”

The gift is not power. God’s gift (whatever it may be) comes with *dunamis*—the innate ability to carry out the gift. All the twice-born are given “the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:20). Whatever the Holy Spirit has gifted us with upon our entrance into His kingdom (1 Corinthians 12:11), He has also given the necessary power to implement and use that gift.

Your gift also comes with love. Again, “love” is not the gift but part of the character of our Lord Jesus and the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Were it not for the reflection in us of the unilateral and sacrificial love of our Redeemer, these supernatural gifts could be misused, distorted, and abused for personal glory. Diotrefes misused his gift, failing to use the spirit of love (3 John 1:9).

Sophronismos is the unique Greek word used to describe the spirit of a “sound mind” that is given to us with our gift. It’s a combination of the Greek verbs translated as “to save” and “to control.” Its basic meaning would be “safe control” or “wholesome control”—perhaps even “control that saves.”

With our spiritual gifts comes the perfect combination of abilities that empower the gift, the love that keeps the gifts focused on others, and the “safety controls” that keep it from doing damage unwittingly. HMM III

Thursday, March 23

He Is the Owner

“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. But if a man be just...he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.”
(Ezekiel 18:4-5, 9)

What an awesome statement! The eternal Creator of all mankind asserting His ownership over each man’s soul to do with it what He deems proper.

What is the worth of one eternal soul created in the image of God? The Creator is the owner of the cattle on a thousand hills. Indeed, the earth and all the galaxies are His, but there is something about a soul that is of far greater worth. A soul can choose, can worship its Maker, and can reflect the very nature of God. Nothing else in all creation has these powers. Yet, He owns *all* souls. He has an unquestionable right to them, and they will never be taken away, for He has created them. Furthermore, their numbers are growing, for He has given His subjects the command and power to reproduce. At each conception He supplies a newly created, eternal soul. Truly, His wealth is great!

How should we respond to His ownership? By obedience! By choosing to act according to His will as revealed in reason, our conscience, and above all in His written Word, we ascribe to Him the glory due Him. We must jealously guard our affections, reserving the adulation that He deserves for Him alone. We must lovingly care for His creation, including the many fellow souls whom He brings across our paths.

Above all, we must avail ourselves of His gracious provision of mercy and forgiveness through the redemptive work of His Son, Jesus Christ. At that point, He performs another creative act, for “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [or creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). JDM

Magnified Mercy

“Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die.” (Genesis 19:19)

This rather presumptuous plea of Lot to the angels who had spared his life when they called down fire from heaven to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah is noteworthy because it contains the first reference in the Bible to the mercy of God. Lot was a believer and a righteous man but carnal in attitude and greedy in motivation. Yet, God not only showed grace in His dealings with Lot but even magnified mercy!

As appropriate for the principle of first mention in Scripture, this first reference to mercy lays the foundation for the dominant theme of the doctrine of mercy throughout Scripture. The key is that God’s mercy can only be described properly in superlatives, and this fact is noted repeatedly throughout Scripture.

“The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him,” said David (Psalm 103:17). “For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him” (Psalm 103:11). His mercy, therefore, is both eternal and infinite. Nothing could ever be more “magnified” than this!

No wonder, therefore, that Paul says He is “rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us” (Ephesians 2:4), and Peter tells us that “his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope” (1 Peter 1:3).

It is only “according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5), surely “not [because of any] works of righteousness which we have done.” Therefore, with David, we can say, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever” (Psalm 23:6). HMM

Saturday, March 25

An Eternal Holy Calling

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” (2 Timothy 1:9)

There appears to be an apparent conflict between God’s salvation, which was determined “before the world began,” and our present need to persuade men to believe the gospel (2 Corinthians 5:11). Jesus urged whoever was burdened to “come unto me” (Matthew 11:28), while insisting He had chosen His disciples rather than the other way around (John 15:16). Scripture often expresses this paradox.

Ephesians 2:8-9 states that our salvation is “not of works” but comes to us by the grace of God through faith—and even that faith is God’s gift. Few would argue that salvation is some sort of cooperative work between God and man, since there is no question that our salvation is not due to our efforts. Many passages verify that teaching.

Today’s text insists that our salvation was “according to his own purpose and grace.” Our salvation must meet the requirements set by God’s standards. Just what does that demand?

God must be holy and just while justifying the ungodly (Romans 3:26). His holiness cannot be compromised. Thus, the incarnate and sinless Redeemer had to be sacrificed in order to reconcile sinful man with a holy God (2 Corinthians 5:21 and Revelation 13:8b). Then, the absolute sequence of redemption through grace had to be determined for those “who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28 and 1 Peter 1:2).

The result of the sacrifice and the sequence had to be fixed so that the redeemed would be “conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29). Praise God for His “unspeakable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15). HMM III

Sunday, March 26

The Teacher and His Words

“For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” (Matthew 12:37)

In many churches, teachers are in short supply. Evidently many who have the Spirit-given gift of teaching are not using it as they should. On the other hand, a Christian must never assume the role of teacher without clear leading from above. As the teacher of the early Jerusalem church wrote, “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (James 3:1). Christ taught in our text that by our words we shall be judged and either justified or condemned. Since for “every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36), how much more so will the words of a teacher be scrutinized, especially a teacher of the Word of God.

Another reason one should be slow to don the cloak of a teacher is that even a teacher finds it hard to live up to his own teachings. “For in many things we offend all [better, ‘we all stumble’]. If any man [stumble] not in word, the same is a perfect man” (James 3:2). Speaking of the Jewish teachers, Jesus instructed His listeners to do what their teachers said, not what they did (Matthew 23:3), and then He condemned hypocritical teachers with seven stinging “woes” (vv. 13-33).

The proper use of the teaching gift perhaps yields greater honor than most but also greater condemnation if error or hurt creeps in. The church does need all the gifts and should not neglect any genuinely Spirit-given gifts of its members.

Nevertheless, one might contemplate the aggressive, anti-creationist stance taken by many professors at evangelical churches, colleges, and seminaries today, teaching theistic evolution, the day-age theory, framework hypothesis, etc., and wonder if Christ’s reference to the “millstone” around the neck might apply (Luke 17:2). JDM

Monday, March 27

I Come Quickly

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22:20)

This is the next-to-the-last verse in the Bible, and it contains the last promise in the Bible. The final promise of the Lord is that He would come back to Earth again “quickly,” but it has been almost 2,000 years since He made the promise, and He hasn’t come yet. Evidently, the word “quickly,” as He used it, did not mean “immediately.”

As a matter of fact, this promise appears no less than six times here in Revelation (Revelation 2:5, 16; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). The first three are in Christ’s messages to the churches at Ephesus, Pergamos, and Philadelphia, respectively. The last three are in His final message to all churches (Revelation 22:16).

The Lord Jesus has not forgotten His promise, for “all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Corinthians 1:20). Furthermore, many spiritual believers in every previous generation have been looking for His coming “quickly,” as He promised, yet they all have died before its fulfillment.

It seems evident that “quickly” must be understood in the sense of “suddenly.” It may well be “in such an hour as ye think not” (Matthew 24:44), and it will occur “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:52) when it happens. It does seem that all the signs of the nearness of His sudden coming are being fulfilled today, except perhaps one. “And the gospel must first be published among all nations” (Mark 13:10) “for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14).

Even this is now being done, it seems. In any case, it is vitally important that we “abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we...not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28). “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” HMM

Born Again by the Word of God

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”
(1 Peter 1:23)

Our rebirth into the family of God is quite unlike our natural birth. All human birth and, indeed, due to the universal curse placed on all creation (Romans 8:20-22) at the time of Adam’s rebellion (Genesis 3), all plant (1 Peter 1:24) and animal reproduction as well is “of corruptible seed,” withering and dying.

Our spirits, however, if we have availed ourselves of God’s free offer of eternal life through the death of His dear Son, have been reborn of “incorruptible” seed, not subject to decay or death. The agent that brought about this transformation is the incorruptible “word of the Lord [which] endureth for ever” (v. 25).

This “word” is modified by two descriptors, both of which are emphatic in the Greek. First, it liveth; i.e., it actually possesses life. His sacrificial death yields our eternal life. Note the precious truth: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Secondly, the Word of God “abideth” (same word as “endureth” in verse 25) forever. There are two emphases here. One is on the quality of the Word; i.e., it will never change or lose its relevance. The other is on the self-perpetuating nature of the Word. It so consists of life that it is able to give life.

“This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:25), by which we are born again to incorruptibility and immortality. “That by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4). JDM

Wednesday, March 29

The Blessed Man

“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” (Psalm 1:3)

The first Psalm constitutes a contrast between the godly individual who delights in God’s law and the ungodly person who is destined for destruction. “Blessed” literally means “happy,” and the habits of such a happy one are described as not only avoiding the thought patterns and lifestyle of the ungodly (v. 1), but also delighting in and obeying the Word of God (v. 2). Our text describes four results of being blessed or happy in the biblical sense.

First, “he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,” with the implication being to dwell in a secure, bountiful state. The verb “plant” actually means “transplanted,” now firmly rooted and provided for, no longer vulnerable, tentative, and undernourished.

Second, he “bringeth forth his fruit in his season.” One does not so nourish a tree without any purpose. Here, following the analogy, the godly individual, nourished and protected by his Maker, can likewise expect to accomplish a purpose—in this case to bear spiritual, eternal fruit.

Third, “his leaf also shall not wither.” Eternal life is the present possession of all who have been “transplanted” by the Lord. Such a one can expect to faithfully bring forth precious fruit in each season of his life.

Fourth, “whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” Success in each endeavor undertaken by one whose delight is the Lord can be expected, such success defined by that which brings spiritual maturity, and eternal fruit, and prosperity, as He defines prosperity.

“For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish” (v. 6). JDM

Thursday, March 30

Once for All

“For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.” (Romans 6:10)

The Greek word *ephapax* translated “once” in this verse actually means “once for all.” Christ did not have to die again and again, a new death for every sinner. He died unto sin once for all, His death being sufficient to take away “the sin of the [whole] world” (John 1:29).

The word *ephapax* occurs only five times in the Bible. Our text is the first, confirming that His once-for-all death for sin was sufficient forever; He now lives wholly “unto God.” The second confirms the reality of this permanent resurrection. In Jewish law, a factual claim was considered confirmed by the principle that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matthew 18:16). Paul recalls that the resurrected Christ “was seen of above five hundred brethren at once” (1 Corinthians 15:6). Two or three would have sufficed, but He had five hundred witnesses. These saw Him alive once for all, and their lives were forever changed.

The other three references are in Hebrews. “[He] needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once [that is, ‘once for all’], when he offered up himself.” “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once [‘once for all’] into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 7:27; 9:12; 10:10).

Once for all He died for sin, then with His own shed blood He entered into the presence of the Father, sanctified us forever, and was raised from the dead by impeccable testimony, once for all. HMM

Friday, March 31

Crucified and Alive

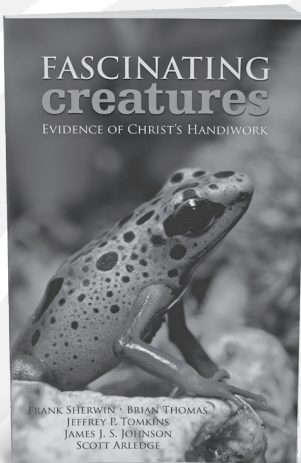
“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.” (Galatians 2:20)

This verse gives us two principles concerning the fleshly nature and our new life in Christ. First, we are admonished to consider ourselves “crucified with Christ.” The verb crucified (*synestaurōmai*) is in the perfect tense, indicating a past event with an ongoing action. In other words, we were crucified with Christ at the new birth and, as one theologian said, are “in the state of being crucified with Christ.” Thus, we are to consider our fleshly nature as in a position of being put to death. Romans 6:6 says, “Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

But the miracle of new birth and ongoing sanctification involve much more than the death of our sinful nature. Paul noted previously in Romans 6:5, “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” Indeed, believers are new creations in Christ Jesus. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). In regard to this new creation, Paul admonishes us to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).

These gospel mysteries and empowering truths should be at the core of our theological convictions. Our spiritual state is our identification with Christ in the redemptive truths of His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. JPT

NEW!



FASCINATING creatures

EVIDENCE OF CHRIST'S HANDIWORK

The Lord Jesus Christ, our Creator, has filled His world with an astonishing number of weird, wacky, and wonderful creatures. This book highlights the innate engineering and abilities Christ has given His living creations to uniquely fit them for their environments.

Cross the desert, swim the ocean, and fly the breeze with us as we explore some of God's fascinating creatures.

Visit ICR.org/store or call **800.628.7640**.

Saturday, April 1

The Rivers and the Sea

“All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.” (Ecclesiastes 1:7)

As the ancients observed the mighty Nile and Euphrates and other great rivers flowing into the ocean, they could not help but wonder why the sea level never rose. They knew that many of the waters in the rivers came from rainfall, especially during floods, but they had only quaint notions, at best, as to where the rains originated. Not until the days of modern science did men discover that rainfall actually comes from the oceans via evaporation and atmospheric transportation.

But the Bible writers somehow seemed to know about the true nature of the hydrologic cycle thousands of years in advance of modern science. The rivers come from the same place to which they return—that is, the sea.

But how do the waters of the sea ever rise into the sky? “He maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof: Which the clouds do drop and distill upon man abundantly” (Job 36:27-28). Water droplets are made very small by the process of evaporation so they can be carried aloft by the up-rushing air forces over warm waters; later they “distill upon man abundantly.”

There are other references in Scripture to different phases of this great hydrologic cycle, but one of the most significant is Isaiah 55:10-11. “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth....So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please.” The waters return to the skies only after doing their good work on the lands. Just so, the life-giving Word of God returns to Him, not void, but full of the spiritual fruit for which He sent it. HMM

Breath and Spirit

“Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein.” (Isaiah 42:5)

“God the LORD” (*Elohim Jehovah*) is here identified as the Creator and organizer of all the universe, the heavens, and the earth, and all things therein. In context, He is also identifying Himself as the One sending forth “my servant” to be given as “a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:1, 6), the coming Messiah of Israel.

He who does all these things also gives every person born both breath and spirit. The “breath” (Hebrew *neshumah*) is that “breath of life” that God breathed into Adam’s nostrils when He created him at the beginning. Even those who do not believe in God must depend on Him for their very breath, since “he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.” Therefore, He is “not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:25, 27-28).

He also gives each person a spirit (Hebrew *ruach*), a word used first of all in reference to the “Spirit of God” (Genesis 1:2). It is this attribute in particular that constitutes the created “image of God” in man (Genesis 1:27). The higher land animals all possess “the breath of life” along with man (Genesis 7:22), but only men and women are created in the image of God, each with an eternal spirit.

Man’s breath and spirit are closely related, and sometimes the words are used almost interchangeably. When the breath departs from a person’s body at death, the spirit also departs with it, but the latter “shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The breath also will be activated again on the coming resurrection day. HMM

Monday, April 3

The Mind of Christ

*“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 2:5)*

Although salvation is free, it is not cheap since it required the Creator Himself to become man and submit to an agonizing death on the cross. This was the mind of Christ!

And, by the same token, although our salvation is not conditioned on any meritorious acts of our own, the standard by which we must measure our lives is nothing less than the perfect life of Jesus Christ. In the first place, our words and deeds are to be compared to His. “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). Our standard of holiness is to be His life of holiness. “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [meaning ‘behavior’]” (1 Peter 1:15).

If we truly follow His steps, they may well lead to suffering and persecution, but “he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1 John 2:6), and this involves a willingness to be “crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20). The Christian life is preeminently to be characterized by unselfish love, but again the standard of that love is nothing less than the love of Christ Himself. “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34).

To love as He loved, to walk where He walked, to be holy as He is holy, to follow His example in word and deed requires that we think as He thought, that the very attitude of our soul be like His. In position we do “have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16), but in practice we still come far short. May God help us to cast down “imagination, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,” and bring “into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). HMM

Tuesday, April 4

Life and Immortality

“But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (2 Timothy 1:10)

Most of us have read or heard the passage in 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 that directly challenges death and hell with the fact of the resurrected Christ and the promise of our own resurrection when He returns. There is no “sting” left in death, and there is no law that overrides our salvation because our Lord Jesus has gained the victory.

Long ago, the great man Job faced his detractors with the confidence that “in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:26). The prophet Hosea, in the middle of difficult life demands and during a time of awful apostasy, heard the Lord promise those who were faithful, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction” (Hosea 13:14).

The good news of the implementation of God’s eternal plan brought “life and immortality to light.” All during the millennia of the Old Testament, fulfillment of God’s actions were hinted at through the sacrifices of the altar, and promised oftentimes in the utterances of the prophets. But when the Messiah became incarnate, “we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14).

The apostle John, whose gospel and letters consummate in the great Revelation disclosure, could say, “The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us” (1 John 1:2). He who is life (John 11:25) promised, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). HMM III

Wednesday, April 5

God's Perfect Way

“As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him.” (2 Samuel 22:31)

This is the 30th verse (out of 50) in David's great “song of deliverance,” evidently considered by God to be of sufficient importance to include it twice in His written Word (2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 18). Its testimony is greatly needed.

One of the most common excuses given by men for rejecting the God of the Bible is their opinion that His ways are unfair. Even Christians are prone to complain at the way God deals with them. But the fact that we may not understand God's ways hardly gives us the right to pass judgment on them. He often reminds us in His Word that His way is perfect and His Word has been tried and proved again and again. “For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth” (Psalm 33:4). “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul” (Psalm 19:7).

We need to settle it in our hearts that, whether we understand them or not, God's ways are always perfect. What He does is right, and whatever He says must be true by definition. His ways are always in the context of eternity, but we leap to judgment in terms of present inconvenience.

His perfect way is seen most fully in Christ, and His truth is heard most clearly in Christ, for “I am the way,” He said, and “the truth” (John 14:6). Yet, Christ's way was through the cross, and His truth was opposed by the father of lies (John 8:44). God's way for us may also lead us into suffering and great opposition, but His way is always perfect, and His Word is tried and true. If we trust Him through it all, He will be our buckler as He was for David. “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him” (Proverbs 30:5). HMM

Thursday, April 6

Our Refuge

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”
(Psalm 46:1-2)

“The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble” (Psalm 9:9). What a comfort it is, in these days of turmoil and opposition, to know that our Lord is “a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat” (Isaiah 25:4).

Our refuge is strong and secure. The psalmist testifies, “I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust” (Psalm 91:2). Then God answers: “Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee” (Psalm 91:9-10, and see also vv. 10-13).

Not only does our refuge provide safety and protection, but no other refuge will do. After identifying our refuge by the words “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste [or be ‘alarmed’]” (Isaiah 28:16), God warns that those who refuse His true refuge will receive instead His “judgment,” for He “shall sweep away the refuge of lies” (Isaiah 28:17).

The apostle Peter, fresh from his personal encounters with his risen Lord, confronted the Jewish leaders with their serious error of rejection. “This is the stone which was set at nought of you” (Acts 4:11). In his charge, however, he included the precious truth “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (v. 12). Our refuge, our sure foundation, is none other than our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom we have “fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Hebrews 6:18). JDM

Friday, April 7

Practicing Righteousness

“LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.” (Psalm 15:1-5)

Easy believism is Satan’s all-time deception, the idea that we can be right with God without a changed heart and life. David challenged this delusive doctrine by asking, “Who shall abide in the [LORD’s] tabernacle?” (Psalm 15:1), meaning who will dwell with the Lord in eternity. The answer affirms a true believer’s growing and fruitful practice: “He that doeth these things shall never be moved,” assuring one’s eternal security (v. 5a). When our Lord Jesus Christ saves a sinner from his sins, his heart is transformed as a new creation, unilaterally affecting his outward behavior (Ephesians 4:24). This involves a positive directional change—not perfectionism, but a true, germinating growth (Romans 7:25).

So, what outward changes are we talking about? A question/answer construct unpacks David’s answer, revealing what’s growing and what’s diminishing in the believer’s changed life in a 12-part response—six positive characteristics (v. 2, v. 4a-c) and six negative (v. 3, vv. 4d-5b).

The apostle John also challenged believers not to fall prey to this deception: “Let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous” (1 John 3:7). There’s nothing we can do to earn salvation, but a saved life practices righteousness. CM

Saturday, April 8

The Companion of Faith

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17)

When Jesus commenced His earthly ministry, He preached the necessity of repentance. The Greek verb for repent (*metanoēō*) means to have a strong change of mind and is given in the imperative form, indicating a direct command. We were told earlier that John the Baptist preached, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2) as he was preparing the way for Christ’s ministry.

The newly resurrected Christ told His disciples “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations” (Luke 24:47). Following this mandate, on the day of Pentecost Peter preached, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38). Paul preached on Mars Hill to a crowd of Greeks, “[God] now commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

Clearly, repentance is an important part of the gospel message, combined with faith in the redemptive work of Christ. The 19th-century preacher J. C. Ryle said, “Repentance is the inseparable companion of saving faith in Christ.” Indeed, many today accept an easy believism in Christ without considering that it will cost them the rest of their lives. Jesus Himself elaborated on this, saying, “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?” (Luke 14:27-28).

While some theologians have called repentance the “negative aspect of conversion,” the positive side is that our mighty God is able to grant “repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18). JPT

Sunday, April 9

He Gave Himself

“Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.” (Galatians 1:4)

There can never be a greater gift than this. Our Lord Jesus Christ not only has given us forgiveness and salvation and all spiritual blessings, He gave Himself! The pure, glorious Son of God gave Himself, substituting Himself in our place to suffer the righteous judgment of God on our sins.

Six times this wonderful affirmation is found in God’s Word. The first is in our text, assuring us that when He gave Himself, He paid the price to deliver us from this present evil world into the eternal world to come.

Then, in the next occurrence, this promise is made intensely personal. Christ “loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). The gift Christ gave is more than the world could ever give.

The supremely sacrificial nature of His gift is then emphasized. “Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:2). The sacrifice has brought us to Himself, for “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it....That he might present it to himself a glorious church” (Ephesians 5:25, 27).

The offering was sufficient to pay for the redemption of all sin, as He “gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Timothy 2:6). This ransom is not merely to redeem us from the penalty of sin at the judgment, however, but also from the power of sin in our lives, and this is the testimony of the final occurrence of this great declaration. Christ “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). HMM

Monday, April 10

Fear the Right Fear

“Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.” (Isaiah 8:12-13)

The people of Judah were terrified by the imminent prospect of invasion by the cruel Assyrian hordes who had been further strengthened by a confederacy with Judah’s own brethren in the 10-tribe kingdom of Israel. It is indeed cause for concern when compromising Christians join ranks with ungodly pagans in opposing those who defend the true Word of God, for such a combination seems almost too strong to resist. A modern example is the current collaboration between the secular evolutionists and those Christian evolutionists and “progressive creationists” who oppose Christians who stand for the literal truth of the biblical record of creation and Earth history.

This is cause only for concern, however, not for fear! Just as in Isaiah’s day, we must fear God—not men. In the coming judgment, it will be far easier to explain to God why we had too much faith in His Word than too little!

These verses are referred to by the apostle Peter in a well-known New Testament passage: “Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:14-15).

Therefore, when unbelievers and compromising believers join forces against those who fully believe the Bible, the proper response is not panic, or submission, or even belligerent opposition, but an implicit confidence in God and His Word, accompanied by a gracious “answer” (literally “apologetic”) in defense of the truth, given in a meek spirit and in fear only of God. HMM

Tuesday, April 11

Reject Favoritism

“My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.” (James 2:1)

Evidently the believers in the early church were much like us in that they tended to honor and favor wealthy individuals in their congregations. James commands them to reject such partiality and gives the reasons why.

The first reason is that God’s perspective is just the opposite. He favors the one of low rank. “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?” (v. 5).

Next, we see that favoritism never impresses the rich—it always backfires. “Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?” (v. 6). Showing favoritism is not practical.

Then, note that the favored ones are probably least deserving. In fact, often “they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called” (v. 7). In doing so, they dishonor the Lord, in whose name we gather.

Finally, such favoritism is a violation of “the royal law,” that summary statement of God’s plan for our relationships. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (v. 8). If the law is kept, “ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin....For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (vv. 8-10).

Peter had learned this lesson, first in a vision, and then in his miraculous ministry to the Gentiles. “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34).

As our text reveals, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and showing favoritism on any basis (not only riches, but color, education, ethnic, or national background, etc.) are not compatible. JDM

Wednesday, April 12

He Is Able

“Nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” (2 Timothy 1:12)

The apostle Paul uses a precision of synonyms. We are to “know” the One in whom we have believed and to be “persuaded” that He is able to “keep” us.

The knowledge Paul cited (Greek *i'do*) emphasizes mental understanding as opposed to experiential knowledge or intuitive perception. *I'do* coupled with the word for persuasion (Greek *peitho*) strengthens the assurance Paul is promising. Our confidence is not based on mere emotion but on a clear grasp of God's secure salvation. Perhaps a quick survey of other passages will encourage your heart as you read this.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

“Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

“God...hath begotten us again to...an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5).

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 1:24-25).

What marvelous promises! Our surety is based on who God is rather than on our own individual steadfastness. HMM III

Thursday, April 13

Together with Christ

“Even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:5-6)

In these two marvelous verses, the word “together” appears three times, referring in each case to our spiritual union with Jesus Christ. Three different words are used, each being compounded with the Greek *sun*, meaning “together with.” The first combination means “made alive with”; the second, “resurrected with”; the third, “seated with.”

All of these verbs are given in the past tense, stressing that, as far as God’s own Word is concerned, we have been already seated eternally in the heavens with Christ, having been born again with His own life spiritually and raised from the dead physically. All of these blessings were given to us “even when we were dead in sins,” not because of our good works or by our good intentions, but only “by grace ye are saved.”

The remarkable truth is that this doctrine of our eternal union with Christ, given and maintained only by His grace, does not lead to carelessness or sinfulness as some allege, but to a desire for a holy, God-honoring life. “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?... like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:2, 4).

The regenerate nature implanted by the Holy Spirit, a heart of gratitude for Christ’s sacrificial love for us, and the wonderful promises in God’s Word all combine to transform our lives, making us new creatures in Christ, knowing that henceforth we shall “ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). HMM

Snares

“Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”
(1 Timothy 3:7)

A snare is a trap normally used to catch an unwary wild animal, but each of the five times the word (Greek *pagis*) is used in the New Testament, it refers to devices used by the great deceiver, Satan, to trap unwary human beings.

There is, first of all, the snare of worldly involvement. “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth” (Luke 21:34-35).

There is the snare of rejecting God’s Word, both the written Word and the living Word. When Israel repudiated Christ, God said: “Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them” (Romans 11:9, quoting Psalm 69:22). The desire for riches can be a snare. “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6:9).

Satan has many other “devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11) by which he seeks “an advantage of us.” Not even “bishops” or other full-time Christian ministers are immune, for our text is a warning to prospective bishops against “the snare of the devil.” It is the responsibility of every true “servant of the Lord” to be “gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves...that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Timothy 2:24-26). We must both avoid Satan’s snares ourselves and seek to deliver those who have been thus ensnared. HMM

Saturday, April 15

Yahweh's Forgiveness and Healing

“Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction.”
(Psalm 103:1-4)

In this psalm, David directs believers to personal praise, reminding them to worship Yahweh for spiritual forgiveness and physical healing. Do all believers receive these two benefits unilaterally? If we are calling out for sin's forgiveness—unequivocally *yes* (1 John 1:9)!

The Lord has always demonstrated His concern for His children's physical well-being. “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). But physical healing is never a guarantee—the only such guarantee is found in the believer's future glorification (Romans 8:30). David prayed hard for spiritual and physical healing after committing his sin against God, Bathsheba, and Uriah (2 Samuel 12; Psalm 51). Spiritual forgiveness was unilateral and immediate, but Yahweh had different plans for David's precious baby (2 Samuel 12:23).

Be reminded, believer, that we live between the pages of Romans 8. We see the groaning of the creation and painfully feel the groaning we ourselves experience. Even so, God providentially sustains our bodies as we carry out His will until His Kingdom comes (Matthew 6:13). I am reminded of what one dear believer experienced from a very painful disease. Given only a year to live, God miraculously allowed her an additional seven years, during which she discipled more than 10 women and led several to a saving knowledge of Christ. She was finally called home into the arms of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Regardless of our circumstances, we must always “bless the LORD” and trust in Him. CM

Sunday, April 16

Things to Keep

“And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” (Matthew 19:17)

The two main Greek words for “keep” in the New Testament both mean more than just “obey,” though this meaning is certainly included. They also mean “guard” and “preserve.” We are thus told by Christ, in our text above, to guard and obey God’s commandments.

The same urgent command to keep what God has given is applied to many other entities in Scripture. For example, Paul stresses that we are to “keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called” (1 Timothy 6:20). In other words, false science (evolution) and vain babbling (humanistic philosophies) will seek to destroy the tenets of God’s truth, so we must always be diligent to guard and protect these truths.

Each person is also urged to “keep himself unspotted from the world” and to “keep thyself pure” (James 1:27; 1 Timothy 5:22). The forces of darkness make perpetual attacks against the spiritual and moral integrity of the Christian, so we must constantly be alert to protect ourselves against their enticements. Then, we must also endeavor “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3) and to “keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 1:21), for the enemy will continually try to sow discord and bitterness among God’s people.

There are many verses that stress the keeping of His commandments (e.g., John 14:15) and the keeping of His words (e.g., 1 John 2:5). Finally, in the very last chapter of the Bible, the Lord sums it all up, as it were, when He promises: “Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (Revelation 22:7). HMM

Monday, April 17

Tragic Ignorance

“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” (Romans 10:3)

There are several important doctrinal truths about which unbelievers—and sometimes even Christians—seem tragically ignorant, with an ignorance affecting their very lives and destinies. Perhaps the most tragic is that mentioned in our text. Paul was writing specifically of the Jews, but the same ignorance is found in countless others—people who seek to earn salvation by their own religious and moral works rather than through faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ, who died for their sins.

There is also widespread ignorance concerning death and life beyond the grave. “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14). With respect to Christian life and ministry, Paul says: “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Corinthians 12:1). Yet, most Christians neglect to develop or use their gifts, mainly because of ignorance concerning their proper function as described in 1 Corinthians 12, 14; Romans 12:3-21; Ephesians 4:7-16, and other key passages.

We urgently also need to be instructed concerning the deceptions of the wicked one, “lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11). For all who seek instruction rather than ignorance, let them study God’s Word, for “all scripture...is profitable for...instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). HMM

Tuesday, April 18

The Conclusion of the Matter

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

The spiritual life of Solomon can, to a great degree, be traced through his writings as recorded in the Bible. They are not straightforward history but are rather in a poetic style that reveals his inner thoughts throughout his life. At the beginning of his reign over Israel, he asked God for “an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad” (1 Kings 3:9), and he subsequently became renowned for his wisdom (e.g., 3:28; 4:29).

Unfortunately, as is well documented in Scripture, his thirst for human wisdom led him into compromise and disobedience, setting the stage for national apostasy and idolatry upon his death. The book of Ecclesiastes chronicles a series of experiments that he conducted in search for the highest human good, but each forced him to conclude that “all is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 1:2, etc.), that there is no humanly discernible pattern in the affairs of men. However, he concludes that life is the gift of God and should be enjoyed (3:13). Furthermore, he recognized the eventual judgment of God and concluded it is best to live in obedience to God’s commands (e.g., 3:16-17).

Our text summarizes the entire book of Ecclesiastes. Here is the secret of human fulfillment. Note the two complementary commands, “fear God” and “keep his commandments.”

A true reverence for God necessarily results in obedience to His commands. Wise Solomon knew it, and Christ and the New Testament writers reinforced it (John 14:15; 1 John 5:2; etc.). Life’s harsh realities and seeming paradoxes are at times incomprehensible to us. Only by adopting a proper attitude toward life and God can we cope. JDM

Wednesday, April 19

The Word and the Spirit

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:12)

How is it that some people can read a biblical passage and find it either tedious, confusing, or even foolish, whereas others will receive great understanding and blessing from the very same passage? The answer is that the first group are animated only by the spirit of the world, “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2), whereas the others are indwelled by the Spirit of God, having received the Holy Spirit when they trusted Christ for forgiveness and salvation.

It was, after all, the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures to begin with. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16), that is, “God-breathed,” where the “breath of God” is none other than the “Spirit of God.” Concerning his own divinely inspired writings, Paul said: “We speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1 Corinthians 2:13).

Likewise, it is the same Spirit indwelling each believer who illumines, and confirms, and applies His own Scriptures to the individual Christian who reads or hears them. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). On the other hand, Jesus promised His disciples that “when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

This He does through the Scriptures He inspired, with blessings abundant as we study them prayerfully and with believing and obedient hearts. HMM

Thursday, April 20

Visit

“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.” (Acts 15:14)

Our English word “visit” has come to mean a social call, but not so in the Greek, where it can mean to inspect, to look upon in order to help, or benefit.

For example, when Christ said “sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not” (Matthew 25:43), He had in mind more than a social call. The prisons of the day were miserable places with no amenities whatever. Prisoners desperately needed help from the outside. Paul wrote to Timothy from his Roman prison, “The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee” (2 Timothy 4:13). By better understanding the word “visit,” Christ’s teaching takes on a richer meaning involving more the idea of a personal commitment.

The events surrounding the birth of the Messiah were considered a “visitation” by Zacharias when he prophesied over the baby Jesus, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people....the dayspring from on high hath visited us” (Luke 1:68, 78). After Christ raised to life a dead boy, the people exclaimed, “A great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people” (Luke 7:16).

In that light, consider our text for today as James explained to the church leaders Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles. With our expanded understanding of the word “visit,” we could now expand the verse to read “how God for the first time did look upon the Gentiles, in order to help them. In doing so, he took out of them a people for his name.” God, in His grace, has done all that was necessary to help us, to bring us out of bondage to sin, and to stamp on us His holy name. JDM

Friday, April 21

Holy Brethren

“I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.” (1 Thessalonians 5:27)

There is probably no word more misused—even abused—than the word “holy.” In our day and age, it usually conjures up an image of sanctimoniousness, or even hypocrisy, and thus often becomes a term of snide ridicule.

Nevertheless, it is a biblical term of highest significance, most often used in connection with God Himself, the Holy Spirit. Since it is also used in connection with things (“the holy place,” as in Hebrews 9:12), it does not in itself necessarily have a moral connotation. Its basic meaning is evidently “set apart” and can refer either to people or objects that have been dedicated to God and His service.

Christians are all “holy brethren” in this sense, regardless of their individual behavior. They are all also called “saints” (same word as “holy” in the Greek—e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:2, even though many of the “saints” at Corinth were far from Christlike in their actions).

By all means, however, we who are called “holy brethren” ought to try, by God’s grace, to bring honor to such a name rather than ridicule. “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him” (Hebrews 3:1-2).

The term “saints,” or “holy brethren,” applies both to men and women, of course, and to believers of Old Testament times as well as New Testament. Peter, for example, mentions “the holy women” who honored and served the Lord “in the old time” (1 Peter 3:5), and also the “holy men of God” through whom God gave the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Peter 1:21). The eternal admonition of God to all believers of every age is “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). HMM

Saturday, April 22

Once, Finished, Forever

“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.” (Hebrews 10:12)

This verse in Hebrews 10 stands in comparative contrast to the previous verse, which says, “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins” (v. 11). It’s noteworthy that the Old Testament priests had to “standeth daily” as they did service in the tabernacle.

There were several reasons for this. The first was that “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). Another less obvious reason was that the tabernacle of Moses and the later temple in Jerusalem didn’t have a single piece of furniture designed for sitting. In other words, there wasn’t a chair in the holy place for the priest to take a rest. There was the altar of incense, the menorah, and even a table of showbread, but no chairs. This was probably to signify that the work of the Old Testament priest was never finished.

In dramatic contrast, Christ Jesus, functioning in His office of high priest, offered His life as a single sacrifice and payment for all our sins—past, present, and future—and then “sat down” at the Father’s right hand. Jesus emphatically sat down to demonstrate that the work of redemption is indeed finished!

In God’s eyes, His people are forever perfect, spotless, and washed whiter than snow by the precious, eternal blood of His Son. Our part is to believe and receive all that has been done for us by Christ, “whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood” (Romans 3:25). JPT

Sunday, April 23

Hold Fast

“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 1:13)

There are several significant pieces to this important command. We must “hold firm” to the “pattern” of the “wholesome words” that have been given to us. And that firm hold must rest in the faith and love that we have in Christ Jesus.

This is not an option. We are to hold to the form of the sound words. *Hypotuposis* is the Greek term, only used one other time in the New Testament, where Paul insists that his life was to be “a *pattern* to them which should hereafter believe” (1 Timothy 1:16, emphasis added). We are to be “under” (*hupo*) the “outline” or “pattern” (*tupos*) of the wholesome words. The purpose of the two letters to Timothy was to encourage the young pastor to follow the example of his human teacher Paul, who had completely submitted himself to the authority of all Scripture.

To the Roman Christians, Paul was delighted that they “obeyed from the heart that *form* of doctrine which was delivered” to them (Romans 6:17, emphasis added). To the Corinthians, he reminded them that the events recorded in the life of Israel had “happened unto them for *examples*” (1 Corinthians 10:11, emphasis added). Paul also insisted that the people of the church at Philippi should “be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an *ensample*” (Philippians 3:17, emphasis added).

Both biblical and church history provide us with patterns to follow. But the sound words of Scripture give what is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
HMM III

Monday, April 24

The Good Deposit

“That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.” (2 Timothy 1:14)

The good thing that Paul referred to surely involves God’s “gift” that young Timothy was given as he entered the ministry. All gifts include the gift of “power, and of love, and of a sound mind” that God has given to all of us (2 Timothy 1:7). The Holy Spirit deposited that gift in us, and we are expected to guard it through the same Holy Spirit.

The action and responsibility are ours. The means by which we obey is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, who entered our bodies at the time of our salvation (1 Corinthians 6:19). That unique down payment of the triune Godhead (Ephesians 1:14) made it possible for us to keep the good with which He entrusted us. The breadth of God’s gift to us is beyond imagining, but there are a few insights that may help us understand His bounty.

In the most broad perspective, we are given “to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 13:11). That gift requires that we be given “the mind of Christ” so that we may grasp these great spiritual truths (1 Corinthians 2:16). The deposit that God placed with us is not a leap in IQ or mental ability. It is truly a “new man” that God has empowered to be “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Colossians 3:10).

But this great spiritual capacity must be guarded. There is no guarantee of spiritual wisdom this side of eternity. We must beware “lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8). God has made it possible for us to gain the wisdom of holiness so “that [we] might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3:19). HMM III

Tuesday, April 25

Doxology to the King

“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”
(1 Timothy 1:17)

In this stirring doxology to the One who allowed him into the ministry (vv. 12-13), whose grace “was exceeding abundant” (v. 14), who “came into the world to save sinners” (v. 15), who showed mercy and longsuffering, and who grants “life everlasting” (v. 16), Paul uses several majestic descriptive terms. Each deserves our attention.

The King eternal. God’s sovereign kingship is in view here. The phrase literally translates, the “King of the ages.” “But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king” (Jeremiah 10:10). He is the King, and we must stand in submission to Him.

Immortal. The Greek word used here implies more than mere exemption from death. A fuller meaning would include total incorruptibility; i.e., the inability to be stained by either decay or death. What a comfort to realize that the believer’s crown in glory will be likewise incorruptible (1 Corinthians 9:25), as will his resurrection body (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Invisible. God is a Spirit and as such cannot be seen. He has chosen to appear on numerous occasions, most notably as Christ, but is usually unseen, the primary meaning of the word. Christ “is the image of the invisible [same word] God, the firstborn of every creature” (Colossians 1:15). Seen or unseen, He merits our praise.

The only wise God. God is unique in His existence and wisdom, “God only wise” (Romans 16:27). He stands alone, solitary, apart from all others.

Surely to this eternal, incorruptible, unseen, unique, wise, sovereign King belongs “honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” JDM

Creation and the Sciences

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” (Genesis 1:27)

The first chapter of Genesis is the foundational chapter of the Bible and, therefore, of all true science. It is the great creation chapter, outlining the events of that first week of time when “the heavens and the earth were finished, and...God ended his work which he had made” (Genesis 2:1-2). Despite the evolutionists, God is not creating or making anything in the world today (except for special miracles as recorded in Scripture) because all His work was finished in that primeval week. He is now engaged in the work of conserving, or saving, what He first created.

There are only three acts of special creation—that is, creation out of nothing except God’s omnipotent word—recorded in this chapter. His other works were those of “making” or “forming” the created entities into complex, functioning systems.

His first creative act was to call into existence the space/mass/time cosmos. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). This is the domain that we now study in the physical sciences. The second is the domain of the life sciences. “God created...every living creature that moveth” (Genesis 1:21). It is significant that the “life” principle required a second act of direct creation. It will thus never be possible to describe living systems solely in terms of physics and chemistry.

The third act of creation was that of the image of God in man and woman. The study of human beings is the realm of the human sciences. Our bodies can be analyzed chemically and our living processes biologically, but human behavior can only really be understood in terms of our relation to God, whose image we share. HMM

Thursday, April 27

Lessons to Learn

“But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Matthew 9:13)

The Lord Jesus called all who would be His disciples to “learn of me” (or “from me,” Matthew 11:29), and our text verse contains the first use of “learn” in the New Testament, thus indicating a basic item we must learn when we become Christians.

The Lord stressed that God cared nothing about the ritualistic offering of animal sacrifices, as such, but rather desired understanding of the meaning of those sacrifices, accompanied by the motivating love and faith of a repentant heart. He referred them back to their own Scripture: “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6). This is the most difficult but most basic lesson to learn by one seeking forgiveness and salvation.

There are many subsequent lessons to learn, of course; many of them very difficult even for sincere, believing Christians. Paul notes one of them he had learned the hard way: “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11). Another difficult but vital lesson has to do with Christian humility in leadership, “that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another” (1 Corinthians 4:6).

Even the Lord Jesus Christ in His perfect humanity had lessons to learn. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). Finally, having learned these and many other such lessons, we must not forget them. Paul, in his final letter, so reminds us: “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned” (2 Timothy 3:14). HMM

Friday, April 28

The Unseen Angels

“For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” (Psalm 91:11)

God has created “an innumerable company of angels” (Hebrews 12:22), and there are many references to them in both Old and New Testaments, but few living men or women have ever actually seen real heavenly angels—or, at least, recognized them as such. We may “have entertained angels unawares” (Hebrews 13:2), for they can assume the appearance of men on occasion, but normally they are invisible to human eyes.

Nevertheless, they are *there!* Furthermore, they are “all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). God has given them charge over us—that is, over each believer “that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High” (Psalm 91:1). They “excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word” (Psalm 103:20).

Wide is the variety of His commandments with respect to angelic ministry to believers. “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.... They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Psalms 34:7; 91:12).

Not only physical protection but also guidance and encouragement are angelic ministries. When a believer dies, angels translate his spirit to the Lord’s presence (Luke 16:22; 2 Corinthians 5:8), and we can look forward then to meeting and thanking them personally as we come to understand better all their ministries on our behalf during our lifetimes. They are keenly concerned with our salvation and spiritual progress, “which things the angels desire to look into” (1 Peter 1:12). Finally, “when the Son of man shall come in his glory,” He will bring “all the holy angels with him” (Matthew 25:31) as He judges the world. HMM

Saturday, April 29

Song of Praise to the Creator

“Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.” (Psalm 33:1-3)

Imagine yourself gathered in ancient days for worship, with stringed instruments tuned and temple choir poised to sing a song of praise. The song’s writer had consulted the scroll of the Pentateuch and read, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). Then he lifted his writing implement and carefully crafted a beautiful piece of music masterfully portraying Yahweh’s creation of and omnipotence over all things.

Believer, imagine hearing these words sung by our choir and accompanied by professional musicians. “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth” (Psalm 33:6). We mere mortals can’t help but stand in awe of Yahweh. We have no choice but to submit to His divine sovereignty.

Why? Because Yahweh used processes like natural selection and millions and millions of years to create His universe? Because He employed mutations, death, and destruction to craft complexity? Because our God authored “creative engines” like the Big Bang? Of course not! Yahweh directly crafted His creation—“His” word, “He” spoke, “He” commanded—and all of His creation salutes Him!

What should be our response? “Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him” (Psalm 33:8). Let us sing the Creator’s praise, for “the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth” (v. 4). CM

Sunday, April 30

The Better Hope

*“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.”
(Hebrews 7:19)*

Men and women have many false hopes in this world, one of which is that they can earn heaven by good works. Even though God’s law is a perfect law, it can never make a person fit for heaven because no one can keep the law perfectly. There is a better hope, however, and that hope is “the hope of salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:8) “which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

This “hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15) is indeed a wonderful hope. In addition to the one in our text (“better”), there are three other adjectives in the New Testament relative to our Christian hope.

First, it is called a “good hope.” “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father...hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2 Thessalonians 2:16).

Next, it is a “blessed hope.” “Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:12-13).

Finally, it is a “lively [or living] hope.” “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).

It is true, of course, that our hope is centered on the eternal future, for “if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19). Nevertheless, the proved resurrection of Christ makes it a good hope, a blessed hope, and a living hope. HMM

Monday, May 1

Strong in Grace

“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 2:1)

In the Old Testament, “grace” (used 69 times) is often applied in the sense of personal favors or physical blessings. “For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11). In the New Testament, however, the term (used 156 times) often seems to emphasize God’s personal empowerment or the granting of His unique spiritual favor, as is clear in the wonderful passage Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Once the saving grace has been given, the believer is expected to use that grace with victory in mind—confidence that empowers our spiritual life and witness. We are to be “strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

Hence, we are to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Ephesians 6:10) as we wrestle against the powers of darkness that battle us unceasingly. Although “[we] can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth [us]” (Philippians 4:13), we must remember that those “things” include the entire spectrum of poverty to wealth and from hunger to satisfaction. God’s grace is strong enough to counter every worldly circumstance.

We must remember, however, that even the greatest heroes of the faith endured intense opposition, seasons of pain and privation, and occasionally were tortured to death (Hebrews 11:32-38). God’s strong grace is sufficient. “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). HMM III

Tuesday, May 2

Prerequisites for Christian Unity

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” (Philippians 2:1-2)

Churches haven’t changed much in 2,000 years. The call to unity in these verses is as needed now as it has always been. Let us examine the prerequisites for unity found here.

Consolation in Christ: The Greek word translated “consolation” is frequently translated “exhortation,” and that seems appropriate here. The “exhortation in Christ” immediately follows this passage where His beautiful life of humility becomes the exhortation to unity among believers, since disunity ultimately comes from pride (v. 3).

Comfort of love: Comfort could be rendered “encouragement,” implying a tender act of incentive. The *agape* love that the Holy Spirit produces in the life of a believer produces the incentive to unity. When believers truly love one another in this fashion, unity prevails.

Fellowship of the Spirit: The Holy Spirit makes possible a precious relationship between believers. Through the Spirit’s empowering, our wills can be molded into Christlikeness, enabling us to live in unity with our fellow saints.

Bowels and mercies: In the Western world, the heart is referred to as the seat of our innermost affections, here called “mercies,” or, literally, “compassionate yearnings and actions.” When Christians have tender compassion for one another, divisions cease.

The four prerequisites for unity are then Christlike humility, Spirit-produced *agape* love, a yielding of the will of each believer to the Spirit, and tenderheartedness toward one another. May God grant that they will know we are Christians by our love. JDM

Wednesday, May 3

Action Verbs

“Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.” (Psalm 148:5)

The concept of “fiat creation” is opposed by evolutionists and all who believe in the so-called geologic ages. Nevertheless, this is clearly the teaching of the Word of God, and God was there! Psalm 148 exhorts all the stars to praise the Lord, and then notes that, as soon as God spoke, they “were created.” Similarly, “by the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.... For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:6, 9).

It is worth noting that whenever the verbs “create” and “make” are used in reference to God’s work of creation, they are never in the present tense. God is not *now* creating or making stars or animals or people as theistic evolution requires; at the end of the six-day creation period, in fact, God “rested from all his work which God created and made” (Genesis 2:3).

This is the teaching of the New Testament also. “The worlds [that is, the space/time cosmos, the ‘aeons’] were framed [not ‘are being framed’] by the word of God [not ‘by processes of stellar evolution’], so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear [not ‘out of pre-existing materials,’ as required by theories of chemical and cosmic evolution]” (Hebrews 11:3).

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself confirmed the doctrine of recent creation. “From the beginning of the creation [not, that is, four billion years after the solar system evolved] God made them [Adam and Eve] male and female” (Mark 10:6). Thus, those who believe in the geologic ages are rejecting both the biblical record and the authority of Jesus Christ in order to attain ephemeral acceptance by the ungodly. This is a poor exchange! HMM

Thursday, May 4

The Strength of the Lord

“I will go in the strength of the LORD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.” (Psalm 71:16)

Since God the Creator is omnipotent, if we can go in His strength, there would seem to be no limit to what could be accomplished. The book of Psalms, in particular, over and over again testifies that God indeed is our strength. For example, “I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower” (Psalm 18:1-2).

But how do we appropriate God’s strength, and how is it manifested in our own lives? The answer is not what most would expect. “He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy” (Psalm 147:10-11). “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6).

Our text itself indicates that going in the strength of the Lord is essentially to “make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.” Speaking of God’s righteousness (not ours) in the fear of the Lord and the leading of the Spirit, hoping only in His mercy, manifests the strength of the Lord.

Furthermore, “the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). And, finally, the apostle Paul, who surely exhibited the strength of God in his life as much as anyone ever did, testified that “he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9). His grace and His joy, shining through our own weakness, enable the man “whose strength is in thee” to “go from strength to strength” (Psalm 84:5, 7) in His service. HMM

Friday, May 5

Results of Religious Compromise

“And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.” (2 Chronicles 19:2)

Jehoshaphat was a godly king of Judah who faithfully served the Lord, but he made the tragic mistake of forming an alliance with ungodly king Ahab of Israel in fighting against their common enemy Syria. After all, he reasoned, they were “brothers,” both descended from Abraham, so they could join together in battling the Syrians.

As a result, although God continued to bless Jehoshaphat during his lifetime, this compromise eventually resulted in great tragedy in his family when his son and successor, Jehoram, married Ahab’s wicked daughter Athaliah and then slew all his own brothers, and soon he himself died of a loathsome disease (2 Chronicles 21:4, 6, 19).

The road of compromise eventually ends in a precipice, especially in matters regarding the integrity of God’s Word and His saving gospel. The timeless principle for Christians today is given in 2 Corinthians 6:14-15: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?...or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”

This warning and command is at least as greatly needed today as it was in Paul’s day. Spiritual, moral, and religious compromise seem to be endemic in the Christian realm today, in both doctrine and practice, and God would warn us that tragedy is imminent in the generation of our children, if not before.

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing” (2 Corinthians 6:17). HMM

Saturday, May 6

Resisting the Devil

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” (Matthew 4:1)

The first recorded event in Matthew’s gospel after Christ’s baptism is His temptation by Satan in the wilderness after He had fasted for 40 days. This amazing account provides us with several practical lessons.

First, we need to understand that the devil is a real and serious enemy. Consider the fact that he wasn’t afraid to tempt the Lord Jesus Himself. This same devil beguiled Eve, deceived David, and sifted Peter like wheat. The Bible tells us that he is a murderer, a thief, a liar, and a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. But this enemy is also often very subtle, since he can even appear as “an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).

We also learn from this account that in response to Satan, Christ wielded “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). The Bible is the chief weapon we must use to resist the devil. Three times Satan attempted to deceive Jesus, and three times his offer was refuted with Scripture as Christ said, “It is written.”

This is why we need to be diligent readers and studiers of the Bible. We can never fight a good fight if we don’t properly wield our chief weapon. We should not only be familiar with its contents, but also have key Scriptures stored in our memories. In fact, one of Satan’s greatest strategies is to distract us from being diligent, regular, daily, prayerful Bible readers.

Thus, we’d do well to follow the two-step formula given in James 4:7—“Submit yourselves therefore to God,” and “resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” JPT

Sunday, May 7

When to Pray

“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.” (Colossians 4:2)

There is no set time to pray, for it is always appropriate. Our text tells us to “continue” in prayer, and this is the same word as in Romans 12:12, which urges us to be “instant in” prayer. In fact, the admonition of 1 Thessalonians 5:17 is to “pray without ceasing.”

Children should pray, as did little Samuel. When the Lord called him, he could answer: “Speak; for thy servant heareth” (1 Samuel 3:10). Young people should pray, as Timothy, who was exhorted by Paul to make “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks...for all men” (1 Timothy 2:1). Adult men should pray, as did Paul himself, who could say to the Christians of Philippi that he was “always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy” (Philippians 1:4). Old men should pray, like Simeon, and old women, like Anna, who “served God with fastings and prayers night and day” (Luke 2:25, 36-37). And even dying men should pray, as did Stephen who, as he was being stoned to death, was also “calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59).

We can pray at dawn like David, who said: “My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up” (Psalm 5:3). In a Philippian prison, “at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God” (Acts 16:25). Daniel “kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed” (Daniel 6:10). There is no time that is not a good time for prayer. One should pray in times of sorrow and also in times of joy, as did Hannah in both circumstances (1 Samuel 1:15; 2:1).

It is a most marvelous privilege that we have through Christ that we are able to speak to the infinite God in prayer and to know that He hears and cares. Therefore, pray! HMM

Things Not Seen

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” (Hebrews 11:7)

The little phrase “things not seen” is used three times in the New Testament, and interestingly enough, these refer to the past, present, and future works of God with respect to the things that are seen.

At the beginning of the “faith chapter” of Hebrews occur these remarkable words: “Now faith is...the evidence of things not seen....Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Hebrews 11:1, 3). That is, the material things of this present world were not made of pre-existing materials; they were supernaturally created by the word of the Creator! These things that are now seen provide evidence (or better, the “conviction”) of the things not seen—that is, of God’s creative work completed in the past.

The “processes” that are now seen (as distinct from the “materials”) date especially from the time of the great Flood. The “things not seen as yet” by Noah—that is, the present atmospheric circulation, the present hydrological cycle, the present seasonal changes, and many other key phenomena of the present order—all were instituted in the days of Noah when “the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (2 Peter 3:6).

Finally, “we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for...the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). Just as surely as the materials and processes of the present world once were unseen but now are easily seen, so the future eternal world will soon be clearly seen when Christ returns. HMM

Tuesday, May 9

This Same Jesus

*“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”
(Hebrews 13:8)*

When the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, then later ascended into heaven, His body was immortal, no longer subject to death—yet it was a *physical* body, capable of being seen and heard and touched, even capable of eating with His disciples. He was clearly recognizable, yet could quickly ascend from Earth to heaven and could pass through a solid wall. As He ascended, two angelic messengers said, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). He was immeasurably different after His resurrection, yet Peter could also proclaim “that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

Furthermore, even when He returns and assumes the eternal throne of the universe, He will still be the same. “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever:... they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail” (Hebrews 1:8, 12).

This was the same Jesus whom John the Baptist identified at the beginning of His earthly ministry. “He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost” (John 1:33).

In fact, before His baptism, and even before His incarnation, He was the same. “In the beginning was the Word... The same was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2). This same Jesus who lived among men, identified by John the Baptist as the Son of God, and who died on the cross, is the eternal Word by whom all things were made, as well as the resurrected Savior and coming King. Jesus Christ is truly “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” HMM

Wednesday, May 10

The Father's Love for the Son

“And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)

In this remarkable verse, God the Father, speaking from heaven itself, introduces His beloved Son to the world. This is the first New Testament reference to “love,” just as the Father’s love for the Son was the first love that ever existed. As Christ prayed in the upper room, “For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

There are many other references to the Father’s love for the Son, including two to the voice at His baptism (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) and two more in the upper room prayer (John 17:23, 26). One great reason for that love is the following: “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life” (John 10:17).

The extent of the Father’s love for His blessed Son was all-encompassing. “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand” (John 3:35). Furthermore, “the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth” (John 5:20).

God also spoke of His “beloved Son” on the Mount of Transfiguration, as cited four times (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; 2 Peter 1:17). Thus, there are seven references in the New Testament to the Father’s heavenly testimony to His beloved Son. Similarly, there are seven passages where the Son Himself testifies of that Fatherly love. In addition to the six cited above, Christ said, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you” (John 15:9).

Seven testimonies from the Father and seven from the Son! Surely the Father loved the Son with a perfect love. And yet—“Herein is love...that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). Such love for unworthy sinners merits nothing less than total thanksgiving from us. HMM

Thursday, May 11

God of All Graces

“Now the God of peace be with you all.” (Romans 15:33)

Our God of all the world has been known by many names in Scripture (*Elohim, Jehovah, Adonai*, etc.), but He is also identified, especially in the New Testament, as the God of many virtues and graces.

Our text calls Him, for example, the “God of peace.” The same appellation is given Him in Romans 16:20, Hebrews 13:20-21, and Philippians 4:9: “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly”; “now the God of peace...make you perfect in every good work to do his will”; “the God of peace shall be with you.”

He is even called the very God of peace who will “sanctify you wholly” in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. He is “the God of hope” in the beautiful invocation of Romans 15:13. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.”

To the sorrowing, He is “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3). And, of course, He is the “God of love,” as Paul reminded the Corinthians in closing his last letter to them. “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (2 Corinthians 13:11).

The apostle Peter wound up his first epistle by reminding his own readers that their God was “the God of all grace.” “The God of all grace,...make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Peter 5:10).

In summary, our gracious God is the God of peace, the God of hope, the God of all comfort, the God of love, and the God of all grace. He is also “the Father of mercies” and “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17; 15:26). And the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, is of God, “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). HMM

Faithful Men

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

Although this verse has been claimed by many as a model for their ministry, the Bible warns, “Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?” (Proverbs 20:6).

Faithful men must be alert and aware of God’s master plan (Matthew 28:19-20), understand the reason for God’s “longsuffering” (2 Peter 3:8-10), and expect and work toward Christ’s return (Matthew 24:42-26).

Such men must be industrious and committed, conscious of the ultimate spiritual evaluation (Matthew 25:14-23), and concerned with even the “least” of the biblical instructions (Matthew 5:19). They must also be faithful stewards (managers) of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:2) and of the manifold grace (gifts) that the Holy Spirit distributed among His churches (1 Peter 4:10).

Those who desire leadership among the churches must also be exemplary family men. “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Timothy 3:4-5). Moses is renowned in this way (Hebrews 3:5), as is Abraham (Genesis 18:19).

Finally, faithful men must be able to teach others. Such capability is an obvious requirement of those who would take leadership roles in the churches (Titus 1:7-9), but the gift of teaching is noted among all of the biblical listings, implying that the need for such “faithful men” is widespread. However, the capacity to teach others, while a wonderful ability, must be exercised with gravity and carefulness (James 3:1). HMM III

Saturday, May 13

Take Heed

“And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you.” (Mark 13:5)

In the account of Christ’s great prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives, as recorded in Mark 13, the Lord Jesus warns us no less than four times to “take heed!” This fourfold admonition (Mark 13:5, 9, 23, 33) must be important and demands our attention!

First of all, our text warns us not to be deceived by human claims of spiritual authority and prophetic insights, for there would come many deceptive teachers claiming to be the returning Christ. When Christ does return, all His saints will know beyond question, for they shall all “meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

His second warning tells us to be prepared for persecutions (Mark 13:9), for “in the world ye shall have tribulation,” and “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12).

His third admonition warns of false Christs and false prophets who will even “shew signs and wonders” (Mark 13:22-23). Many will be deceived unless they remember that neither prophecies nor exorcisms nor other wonderful works suffice for acceptance by Christ if those who perform them are “work[ers of] iniquity” (Matthew 7:22-23).

The fourth “take heed” is a sober warning against trying to predict the time of His return. “Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is” (Mark 13:33). Such a warning is pointless if certain prophesied events must take place first, for then there would be no need to watch for Him. In the same discourse, as reported by Luke, Jesus gave a final such warning, speaking of this very danger. “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with...cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares” (Luke 21:34). HMM

The Elect Lady

“The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth.” (2 John 1:1)

The Greek word for “lady” (*kuria*) is used only two times in the Bible, and both of these occurrences are here in the one-chapter epistle of 2 John. It is also fascinating to note that *kuria* is the feminine form of *kurios*, which is the Greek word for “Lord.”

Evidently this “elect lady” was a special woman, very highly esteemed by the apostle John as a capable and conscientious mother to her children.

It is uncertain, however, whether this distinguished lady was a literal mother in the church with literal children or possibly a metaphor for the church itself, with the “children” its individual members. Good reasons can be given for both interpretations, and it may even be that John wrote his letter with this dual meaning in mind under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In either case, it is significant that this mother is called “lady” instead of the much more frequently used “woman” (Greek *gune*), or even “mother” (Greek *meter*). The Greek *kuria* was evidently used to stress deep respect and honor to such a mother in the church. She clearly was training her children in “the truth,” much as Timothy’s mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, had brought him up to have “unfeigned faith” in “the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15).

In addition to faith in God’s truth, of course, there should be genuine love. The second use of *kuria* is in verse 5: “And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another” (2 John 1:5). HMM

Monday, May 15

Astonishing Doctrine

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine.” (Matthew 7:28)

This is the first mention of “doctrine” (Greek *didache*) in the New Testament, and as such it is significant that it refers to the doctrines taught by Christ in the so-called Sermon on the Mount. It is also significant that there are four other verses telling us that His hearers were “astonished at his doctrine” (Matthew 22:33; Mark 1:22; 11:18; Luke 4:32) in addition to the statement in Acts 13:12 that a certain new convert had been “astonished at the doctrine of the Lord” when he heard Paul preach.

The astonishing aspect of the doctrine of Christ is indicated by Mark. “They were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes” (Mark 1:22). No wonder He could speak with authority! “My doctrine is not mine,” He said, “but his that sent me” (John 7:16). Paul could also teach this astonishing doctrine because he was careful to teach only the Word of God. And so can we if we likewise believe and teach only in the context of the inerrant, doctrinal authority of God’s Word.

It has become fashionable today, even in many evangelical churches, to avoid “indoctrination” in favor of “discussion” and “personal Christianity.” This is a great mistake and largely accounts for the increasing secularization of our society and the weak testimony of the Christian church. In the Bible, teaching and doctrine are the same, so that true teaching is indoctrination, and teaching “all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20) is an integral part of Christ’s great commission. It is imperative that we, like Paul, teach “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), for “whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God” (2 John 1:9). HMM

Tuesday, May 16

They Have Their Reward

“Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.” (Matthew 6:2)

Evidently in our Lord’s day there were individuals who, when they went to the synagogue to give of their money, did so with great show, even having a trumpeter go before them to announce their actions. They also prayed openly “standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men” (v. 5). Jesus called them hypocrites.

The Greek word for hypocrite was used primarily for a stage actor—one who acted as if he were another person, perhaps using a large mask to hide his true identity. In this case, the hypocrite played the part of a generous person or a pious person who, out of a heart of concern for the poor or out of genuine love for God, would give or pray abundantly. But under the “mask” was only a desire to have others recognize and glorify him. Perhaps they received the applause of the onlookers, to which Jesus remarked, “They have their reward” (v. 5), even as the hypocrites in the synagogues and in the streets receive theirs.

The word “have,” an ordinary word, is here modified by a prefix that changes its meaning to “have in full” and was commonly used on business receipts to mean “paid in full.” No payment or service was expected to follow the close of the transaction.

How sad it is when we do “Christian” work today for the praises of men and not the glory of God. Whatever comes of our work will be here; there will be no more reward to follow. Rather, let us give, or pray, or work in secret, as it were, “and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly” (v. 4). JDM

Wednesday, May 17

Good Soldiers

“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” (2 Timothy 2:3-4)

From a Kingdom perspective, a good soldier has several responsibilities. Initially, we can expect challenges, wherein we might “suffer trouble as an evil doer” (2 Timothy 2:9), endure afflictions (2 Timothy 4:5), or even be afflicted (James 5:13).

Ultimately, a soldier has one purpose, “that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” Put another way, “do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10). Soldiers are called out of the normal life of a nation and dedicated to executing the will of the king.

Thus, from a spiritual perspective, “know ye not that friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). The source of that friendship is a focus on walking by the flesh, which has no good thing in it and cannot please God (Romans 8:8).

We are to “war a good warfare” (1 Timothy 1:18) and to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12) because “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

Fighting God’s battles with God’s armor ensures the ultimate victory promised by our King, Creator, and “captain of the host of the LORD” (Joshua 5:14). “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it” (Isaiah 25:8). HMM III

When We Abide in Christ

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” (John 15:4)

The Lord Jesus has told us to be careful always to “abide” in Him. The Greek word means “remain,” “endure,” “continue,” or “dwell.” He is to be our motivation, our standard, our home, our everything. When we do abide thus in Him, the Scriptures indicate that it will make a great difference in our lives right now, as well as in the life to come.

For example, “he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1 John 2:6). Furthermore, “whosoever abideth in him sinneth not” (1 John 3:6). Love for our Christian brethren will be evident, for “he that loveth his brother abideth in the light” (1 John 2:10). We will obey His Word, for “he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth [same word] in him, and he in him” (1 John 3:24).

In Christ’s discourse on the vine and the branches (John 15:1-16) are several wonderful promises to the Christian. “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit” (v. 5). “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (v. 7). “These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain [same word] in you, and that your joy might be full” (v. 11). “I have chosen you...that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (v. 16).

If we dwell in Christ, we actually are abiding in the Father and the Spirit also. Jesus said that “the Spirit of truth...dwelleth with you,” and “[my Father and I] will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:17, 23).

Therefore, let us “abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28). HMM

Friday, May 19

Judging Error

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” (Romans 16:17-18)

In order to *mark* and avoid those professing Christian teachers and leaders who are promoting doctrinal heresy (thus causing divisions among Christian believers), it is obvious that we must exercise sound biblical discernment and judgment. This judgment must be based on “the doctrine which ye have learned” from God’s Word. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

Such decisions are not to be based on supposed scholarship, tolerance, or eloquence, for such teachers “by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” Instead, we must know and apply God’s Word, the Holy Scriptures. We must be like the Bereans, who, when they heard new teachings, “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

It is sadly true today that many who call themselves Christians have compromised with the pseudo-scientific worldview of evolutionary humanism that controls all secular schools and colleges, hoping thereby to avoid the “offence of the cross” (Galatians 5:11) and to remain on good terms with “the princes of this world” and “the wisdom of this world” (1 Corinthians 2:6).

They do this for their own personal gain or prestige, however, not serving Christ “but their own belly” (Romans 16:18). Those who are simple Bible-believing Christians are, therefore, not to be deceived by their “good words” but to “mark” and avoid them. HMM

Saturday, May 20

Wise Men Lessons

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.” (Matthew 2:1)

We don't know who these wise men were who came to worship Christ except that they saw “his star in the east” (Matthew 2:2). Some have speculated that they may have been Chaldeans who had some Scripture knowledge from Israel's Babylonian captivity. Nevertheless, we can learn a few things from this verse.

First, it's not always those who come from a religious background who give Christ great honor. Unlike the angelic notice to the shepherds at Christ's birth, these men were from outside Israel. They were not of the scribes or Pharisees but came from a far country. Many of the strongest Christians are redeemed from the most unlikely and utterly lost backgrounds; “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20).

Second, the incredible journey these men undertook points to their determination and diligence. They had no access to modern high-speed transportation but took upon themselves a long, slow, costly, dangerous journey to get to Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

And finally, these men provide a striking example of faith. They believed in a Christ whom they had never seen, and when they arrived, they worshiped a King who was still a child and had not yet performed a single miracle to convince them or given a single teaching to persuade them. Nevertheless, they “fell down, and worshiped him” (Matthew 2:11).

The apostle Peter, who actually witnessed Christ's miracles and teachings, exhorts us to a similar faith. “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8). JPT

Sunday, May 21

God's Sovereignty

“And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?” (Exodus 4:11)

This divine rebuke to Moses was occasioned when Moses complained of his inability to speak eloquently for God before Pharaoh. It is also a rebuke to each of us who would dare question God's wisdom in making us as we are—even with all our innate defects and handicaps. With our very limited knowledge of God's purposes and our very short-range view of eternal priorities, we are ill-equipped to prejudice His ways with us.

To those who questioned why a man should be born blind, for example, Jesus answered: “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:3). As another example, when certain believers complained about the lethal illness of a loved one, Jesus replied: “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby” (John 11:4).

The steadfastness of Stephen's faith as he was stoned to death led to Paul's conversion, though at the time it must have seemed difficult for his Christian brethren to understand and accept. In another context, but stating a principle highly relevant to such questions, Jesus reminds us, “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter” (John 13:7). God is not capricious, but He is sovereign. Whatever He does is right, by definition, and whatever He allows is for a holy purpose. “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” (Romans 9:20).

It should be enough for now to know that He knows, and that when suffering comes for His sake, it is “for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness” (Hebrews 12:10).

HMM

Monday, May 22

The Opened Heavens

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” (Revelation 19:11)

This is the final climactic reference in the Bible to God’s opened heavens. Sometimes, as in this verse, heaven is opened in judgment; sometimes in blessing. Sometimes it is the atmospheric heaven that is open; sometimes the heaven of heavens where stands the throne of God.

The first such mention refers to the world-destroying Flood of Noah’s day when “the windows of heaven were opened” (Genesis 7:11). The second mention, however, speaks of blessing. God had “opened the doors of heaven, And had rained down manna upon them to eat” (Psalm 78:23-24). The windows of heaven rained down the waters of death, while the doors of heaven rained down the bread of life! Ezekiel also saw the heavens opened in judgment (Ezekiel 1:1), but God told Malachi, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse ...and prove me now...if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10).

At the baptism of Jesus, the heavens were opened and men heard the great testimony of the Father concerning His beloved Son (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:21). Jesus promised Nathanael, “Hereafter ye shall see heaven open” (John 1:51), and Stephen and Peter actually saw the heavens open (Acts 7:56; 10:11).

Finally, the apostle John reported that “a door was opened in heaven” (Revelation 4:1), and he saw the Lord on His throne—12 specific references (four in the Old Testament, eight in the New) to the opened heavens. HMM

Tuesday, May 23

The Gospel of Peace

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” (Isaiah 52:7)

Surprisingly, there are more verses containing the word “peace” in the Old Testament book of Isaiah (King James Version) than in any other book of the Bible. The central occurrence (15 before, 15 after) is in our text, speaking of those whose feet travel with the beautiful gospel (that is, “good tidings,” mentioned twice in this verse) of peace. The one proclaiming this gospel is said to be publishing salvation, announcing the imminent reign of God the Savior over all the earth.

The first mention of “peace” in Isaiah speaks of the coming King and His reign, and so does the final occurrence. First, “the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called...The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). Then, in Isaiah’s last chapter we read, “For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to [Zion] like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream” (Isaiah 66:12).

This wonderful gospel of peace is specifically mentioned just twice in the New Testament. The first is a direct quotation from our text. “And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10:15).

The second is in connection with the Christian’s spiritual armor. The “beautiful feet” that are to carry the good tidings are, most appropriately, to be “shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15). It is our high privilege to be among those whose feet travel upon the mountains, and across the plains, and over the seas with the beautiful gospel of peace and salvation. HMM

Memory and the Holy Spirit

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:26)

John wrote his detailed discourses of Jesus (almost half of the verses in John’s gospel consist of His words) approximately 50 years after Christ spoke them, yet John was able to report them verbatim because of the supernatural memory of them brought back by the Holy Spirit. The same must have been true for the other biblical writers as they recalled words and events of years before.

In a real, though different, sense, the Holy Spirit also can “bring to our remembrance” the words of Scriptures just when they are especially needed in witnessing or for personal guidance or some other need. This will only be operational, of course, if they have first been stored in our memory, either by direct memorization or by such frequent reading and studying of the Bible as to make it a part of our subconscious memory.

Recall how the unlearned fisherman Peter was able to quote long passages of Scripture when he needed them (see, for example, Acts 2:16-21, 25-28, 34-35). He had apparently spent much time in studying and even memorizing key portions of the Old Testament. Jesus, of course, frequently quoted Scripture in His conversations, and Paul quoted Scripture abundantly in his epistles. Should we not do the same?

Scripture memorization has been a great blessing to many Christians over the years but seems to have become almost a lost art in this day and age. Nevertheless, Christ has promised answered prayer “if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you” (John 15:7). So, as Paul urged, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16). HMM

Thursday, May 25

The Whole Law

“Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.” (Leviticus 18:58)

The absolute holiness of God is emphasized throughout the book of Leviticus, and this is the standard for all those created in His image. This is made clear, beyond question, when today’s verse is quoted in the New Testament: “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, the man that doeth them shall live in them” (Galatians 3:11-12).

It is not enough that a man keep most of God’s laws. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Galatians 3:10).

It is obvious, therefore, that while “the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12), no human being (except Jesus Christ) has ever been able to keep God’s perfect law, and all are therefore under God’s condemnation. “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20).

The widespread delusion that a person can be saved by good works is dangerous, and many are on the road to hell smug in their supposed goodness. To keep the law, however, the Creator Himself had to become man, and He *did* fulfill the law as our representative before God. Then, when He died, Christ “redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). “Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested...by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe” (Romans 3:21-22). HMM

What Is Sin

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” (1 John 3:4)

The Bible warns that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), and “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20). These are strange days, however, and there are many “that call evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20). Who is to say what is right and wrong, when even our U.S. Supreme Court implies that there are no absolutes?

God is the one who defines sin because it is He who will judge sin. The definition is multifaceted, for sin takes many forms. Most basically, as our text says, sin is the transgression of the law—not just certain laws but *all* of God’s law. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10).

But there must be more than just formal obedience to God’s commands, for “all unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17). Furthermore, there are sins of omission as well as sins of commission. “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

When there is no specific law or command to guide our actions in a particular situation, the principle to follow is that of faith—that is, the confident inward assurance that we are doing that which honors the Lord, for “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23).

There is much more that could be noted, but it is clear that no one could ever measure up even to these demands, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). All of us deserve the wages of sin, “but God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Now “the righteousness of God without the law is manifested....Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ” (Romans 3:21-22). HMM

Saturday, May 27

At God's Good Pleasure

"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." (Psalm 115:3)

We often raise questions about God's actions, but He is never obligated to explain to us His reasons. It is enough to know that it pleased Him, for whatever He does is right by definition.

For example, if someone asks why God created the universe, we must answer simply that it was for His "pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places" (Psalm 135:6). He does not have to give account to us, for we also were created at His pleasure.

And why did He allow His Son to suffer and die on the cross? Although "he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him" and to "make his soul an offering for sin," knowing that eventually "the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand" (Isaiah 53:9-10).

We may never be able to understand why God has done this, especially for sinners such as us, but we don't have to understand. "It pleased God...to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21), not them that understand.

We can be sure that God does have perfect reasons for everything He does, and perhaps we shall understand it all in eternity. In the meantime, we are simply (with Paul) to be thankful that "it pleased God, who...called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me" (Galatians 1:15-16). He has, in some way beyond comprehension, "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:5), and that is enough to know for now. HMM

The Faithful Saying

“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.” (2 Timothy 2:11-13)

This saying may have been a song or other memory device that Paul recommended as a summary of doctrine. It expresses important elements of saving faith. First, Christ’s vicarious death gives us eternal life in Him. We “who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1) have been created “in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24) and have “passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

Second, standing with Christ in this life attests to our reigning with Him in the next. The “persecutions and tribulations that [we] endure” are a “manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that [we] may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which [we] also suffer” (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5).

Also, denying Christ in this life will ensure that He will deny us for eternity. “Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:33). “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels” (Revelation 3:5).

Finally, even our unbelief will not affect Christ’s faithfulness. “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen” (2 Corinthians 1:20). “Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever” (Psalm 119:160). “For I am the LORD, I change not” (Malachi 3:6).

May this faithful saying be your foundation in faith. It is a guide to salvation and an anchor for eternity. HMM III

Monday, May 29

Christian Freedom

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” (Galatians 5:13)

Liberty has always been a cherished concept to Americans, ever since the patriotic call of Patrick Henry for liberty or death. It was also a burning issue with the Jews at the time of Christ, chafing under Roman rule as they were. Many early Christians were actually slaves or even in prison for their faith. All those in bondage have longed to be free, and wars and revolutions have been fought to gain their freedoms.

But the worst bondage of all is slavery to sin. No army can free a man from sin, and if he dies in sin, he will continue in bondage forever. Among the last words of the Bible are these: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still” (Revelation 22:11).

It is only Christ who can set a sinner free. Christ died for our sins, and through faith in Him we receive full pardon and liberty. “Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin....Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:6-7, 18).

There’s no greater or truer freedom than freedom in Christ. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). Because of Christ, creation itself, now groaning and travailing in pain under the curse of sin, one day soon “shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8:21).

In Christ we now have freedom to live unto righteousness. “Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Romans 6:22). HMM

Tuesday, May 30

That I May Know Him

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” (Philippians 3:10)

Paul deeply desired to know Christ in an intimate fashion—to experience an even deeper relationship. In our text, he lists three things that will also be known if we know Christ.

The power of His resurrection: The victory of Christ over sin and death exhibited His great power. Paul not only longed for an ultimate resurrected body, “if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (v. 11), but he longed for the power over sin as well, “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11).

The fellowship of His sufferings: Paul’s desire to know Christ was so great he was willing, if need be, to suffer as He suffered. And, indeed, Paul did suffer in many ways (as seen in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 and elsewhere). “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:17).

Being made conformable to His death: Paul was willing to die as Christ died and soon did die a martyr’s death, beheaded in a Roman prison. But that is not in view here. Rather, he wanted to be like Christ in His death, gaining complete victory over all sin. “For he that is dead is freed from sin” (Romans 6:7).

To know Christ in this way, to be conformed to Him as Paul desired, primarily demands developing the servant’s heart and selfless humility that took Christ to the cross (Philippians 2:5-8) to make it possible for us to know Him. JDM

Wednesday, May 31

All in All

“Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” (Deuteronomy 32:3-4)

It is a thrilling exercise to note all the holy and gracious attributes attached to the name of God by the writers of Holy Scripture. In our text, for example, taken from the song of Moses, God is called a “God of truth.” According to the prophet Isaiah, the Lord is a “God of judgment” (Isaiah 30:18).

David called God both the “God of my righteousness” and “the God of salvation” (Psalms 4:1; 68:20).

In the New Testament, Stephen called Him “the God of glory” (Acts 7:2). Paul called Him both “the God of hope” and “the God of patience and consolation” (Romans 15:5, 13) when he wrote to the persecuted believers in the great capital of the Roman Empire.

To the carnal Christians in Corinth, He was called “the God of all comfort” and “the God of love and peace” (2 Corinthians 1:3; 13:11), and to the suffering believers in Philippi, Paul identified Him as “the God of peace” (Philippians 4:9).

The apostle Peter called Him “the God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10), and the writer of Hebrews recognized Him as both “God the judge of all” and “the God of peace” (Hebrews 12:23; 13:20).

Our God is, indeed, the God who is all in all to His people. He is the God of truth and righteousness, of peace and love, of patience and comfort, of hope and grace, glory, and salvation. “Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints” (Revelation 15:3). Is He, above all, “Lord of all” in us who know Him? HMM



P. O. Box 59029
Dallas, Texas 75229
800.337.0375
ICR.org

The Institute for Creation Research

ICR equips believers with evidence of the Bible's accuracy and authority through scientific research, educational programs, and media presentations, all conducted within a thoroughly biblical framework.